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Changing Displays of Assyrian Art in Nineteenth Century England

Clayton W. Kindred

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Changing Displays of Assyrian Art in Nineteenth Century England

Clayton W. Kindred

**Thesis submitted to the
College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

**Master of Arts
in
Art History**

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School of Art + Design

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Abstract

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Clayton W. Kindred

In 1846, the British polymath Austen Henry Layard began archaeological excavations in the mounds of ancient Assyria, approximately twenty miles south of the modern day city of Mosul, Iraq. Uncovering artifacts almost immediately, Layard's discoveries were sent to the British Museum, where they were first displayed in 1847. Academic research on this scenario has recently experienced a great resurgence, with works such as Frederick Bohrer's seminal, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, and Shawn Malley's thorough, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain*, exploring the vast social and political connections that existed between Layard, the British Museum and the British State. But, while these works (and others) have aided in pushing the boundaries of social art history, archaeological pedagogy and postcolonial and exoticist discussion, they have somewhat neglected discourse on the actual objects which Layard discovered. As such, little has been published on how Layard's discoveries were presented in exhibitory display. Therefore, in employing primary source material from newspapers, journals and periodicals, as well as contemporary art theory, this thesis will investigate how Assyrian art objects were displayed at the British Museum in 1847, 1849 and 1851, at the Sydenham Palace in 1854, and in British India in 1846. Focusing specifically on the space that the displays were given and the individual objects included in each display, this thesis will examine how the Assyrian artifacts struggled against unknown historical context and interpretive value, to become an integral and sensational part of art and culture in the nineteenth century.

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For Murphy, this one's for you girl.

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Introduction

In 1980, Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach published *The Universal Survey Museum*, in which they state, “for over a century the museum has been the most prestigious and authoritative place for seeing original works of art. Today, for most people in Western society, the very notion of art itself is inconceivable without the museum.”¹ Identifying the museum as a type of artistic, social-engineer, Duncan and Wallach highlight factors that have allowed museums to function didactically and pragmatically within popular and refined culture, and to dictate how art objects are perceived by their viewing public. This concept will play a key role in this study, which focuses on changing displays of Assyrian art in Victorian London, presented in the years: 1847, 1849, 1851 and 1854.² Also, and in the spirit of *The Universal Survey Museum*, this thesis will investigate the social determinants that acted as a vehicle for Assyrian exhibitionary change. In the mid nineteenth century, social inducements were widespread and involved everything from colonial expansion, the Voting Reform Act and the desire for biblical elucidation. Therefore, by necessity, this study exists at the interstices of nationalism and ethnopolitics, colonialism, post-colonial examination and even biblical study. However, examining colonial activity or post-colonial outcomes will not be the main goal. Instead, this thesis will delineate how displays of Assyrian art changed as a result of imperial conquest, nationalistic achievements and social examination, and argue that as a result of advancing aesthetic, theoretical and political ideas inside of the British Museum, Assyrian art vacillated in display, importance and merit.

¹ Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach. “The Universal Survey Museum”. *Art History*, Volume 3, Issue 4 (December 1980): 448.

² Assyria, historically, was based in what is presently Northern Iraq. In the 19th century however, Assyria, was a type of blanket term used for areas in Iraq, Syria and Iran. For a greater, general understanding of ancient Assyria, please see: Julian Reade. “Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art”. In *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*. (Copenhagen, 1979): 329-343

I will begin with information concerning the origin of the British Museum, an institution which plays a vastly important role in evaluating sociocultural activity in the nineteenth century. As Chantal Georgel has said, “as heir to the cabinet of curiosities and bearer of the ideals of the Enlightenment and Revolution, the museum needed to be able to represent itself as a world of microcosm.”³ While much has been made about the British Museum’s somewhat narrow-minded admissions policies and collecting in the nineteenth century (and will be again brought up in this writing), it is important to understand the Museum truly did function in the manner that the above quote suggests. Derived from the collections of affluent individuals, the British Museum (originally called Montague House) “was an Enlightenment institution in a post-Enlightenment world.”⁴ With this in mind, beginning in the 1770s, the British Museum began to sponsor the retrieval of diverse artifacts from foreign lands by Museum and government emissaries. At first considered a “scientific” pursuit, this accumulation of alterity evolved into the pursuit of what is today known as “archaeology.”

After the introduction, I will recount how Assyrian artifacts, with the aid of the British Museum, were initially discovered and disseminated throughout the British Empire. The first artifacts uncovered in the Near East were retrieved from the mounds surrounding ancient Nineveh by the Frenchman Paul Émile Botta in the early 1840s, and by his English counterpart Austen Henry Layard between 1845 and 1846. Amongst those who study early archaeology or the Victorian period, the personas of Layard and Botta are well known; the two individuals truly were nineteenth century celebrities. However, the majority of the literature and knowledge

³ Chantal Georgel. “The Museum as Metaphor in Nineteenth-Century France”. Daniel J. Sherman, Irit Rogoff, *Museum Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 115.

⁴ Frederick Bohrer. “The Times and Spaces of History: Representation, Assyria and the British Museum”. Daniel J. Sherman, Irit Rogoff. *Museum Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 201. Please see Chapter I for more information on the origin of the British Museum.

existing on Botta and Layard concerns primarily the social circumstances of their sponsorship, and often idealized archaeological undertakings, and not their actual archaeological discoveries. In this section then, it is my goal to highlight specific artifacts discovered. Objects uncovered by Botta and Layard were shipped back to France and England by 1847, where they were displayed at the Louvre and the British Museum.

For the British, by the nineteenth century, importing antipodal artifacts was nothing new, as by the time of Layard's archaeological undertakings, state entities such as Parliament and the British Museum had been complicit in the reaping of monuments from both Occidental and Oriental locations. The second section of this thesis deals with this notion, and will specifically examine the displays of Assyrian objects discovered as a result of Layard's archaeological excavations —first in British India in 1846, and then at the British Museum in 1847, 1849 and 1851 — in comparison to the display of other artifacts at the British Museum. In doing this, I will aim to specifically identify artifacts included in each display, and through analyzing primary source documents, will attempt to reconstruct the exhibitions as accurately as possible, from an object level. In these displays, I will highlight the spatial construction and creative art objects included in the displays of Assyrian art in British India and the British Museum, while also noting the amount of space that each display was given, the place within the overall Museum of the displays, and the specific objects included.

In section three of this study, I present a visual and formal analysis of the Nineveh Court, constructed at the Sydenham Crystal Palace in 1854. At the Nineveh Court, geographic notions of “Assyria” and artistic representations of “Assyrian art” were idealized, and presented to the general public as such. In my study of the Nineveh Court, I would like to highlight these idealizations, in light of their contemporary social circumstances and with regards to the displays

of Assyrian art, which had occurred at the British Museum previously. The Sydenham representations of “Assyria” transformed the newly discovered ancient civilization into popular culture. Indeed, Assyrian cultural heritage was completely transformed by its discovery, adoption and transformation in nineteenth-century England. Originally, it would seem, the display of Assyrian artifacts revolved around their history, perceived and inferred, known or unknown. Yet, in later years, as at Sydenham, it will be shown that the object’s social popularity provided an impetus for larger and more ornate display. Exploring these changing displays then, culturally, and at an object level, is the overall aim of this study.

This writing exists at the nexus of art historical, archaeological and post-colonial examination. As this study is theoretically grounded in a discourse of nationalism, exoticism and exotic interpretation, questions concerning the confluence of Anglo-Assyrian cultural connections will be encountered and posed. This study will examine the intermingling of ancient Assyrian culture and Victorian England in an effort to achieve some measure of clarity on the role of the public, the museum and artifact imperialism in the nineteenth century.

Part I

Chapter I

The British Museum and Artifact Imperialism

Founded in 1753, the British Museum was begun as an institution dedicated to the edification and pleasure of the socially elite. Founded on Great Russell Street in the central London borough of Bloomsbury, the Museum's original location was a manor house belonging to the Duke of Montagu (1638-1709). Called "Montague House," the first incarnation of the British Museum was positioned within a fashionable and aristocratic district, frequented and inhabited by members of the highest classes, many of whom possessed individual art and object collections of some repute.⁵ Accordingly, Montague House functioned primarily as a "receptacle for the donations of private collections," such as the original ones made by Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) in 1751 and King George II (reigned 1727-1760) in 1753.⁶ Opening in 1759, Montague House was theoretically available to any individual who wished to visit, though as it was stationed within an affluent neighborhood and transportation around London for those of lesser means was difficult to arrange, the patrons of Montague House were entrenched within one distinct social group.⁷ By the second half of the eighteenth century, when the Bloomsbury area began to display more economic stratification and social diversity, Montague House's "liberal policy of admission was reduced to restricted admission," available chiefly to those of abundant means.⁸

In the 1770s, the Trustees of Montague House became unofficially involved with British foreign diplomats in an effort to harvest and import cultural artifacts from Western and Eastern

⁵ Sometimes also spelled "Montagu".

⁶ David K. van Keuren. "Museums and Ideology: Augustus Pitt-Rivers, Anthropological Museums, and Social Change in Later Victorian Britain". *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Autumn, 1984): 1712.

⁷ Montague House opened with the two noted donations as the centerpieces of its collection.

⁸ Linda Colley. *Britons Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 85-86.

cities, such as Athens and Cairo.⁹ In this, private individuals (though oftentimes ones with existing ties to the British Government) became purveyors of Montague House by proxy.¹⁰ During this time, “the British began to specialize in semi-official [archaeological] patronage” and “used their military prowess and diplomatic influence to survey, excavate and remove antiquities. . .”¹¹ State supported archaeological and collecting ventures would feature most prominently in Italy, Greece and Egypt, though by the midpoint of the nineteenth century, English-state sponsored archaeology had made discoveries in Mesopotamia which rivaled those in the West.¹² These Mesopotamian discoveries were the work of the trained barrister and Eastern wanderer Austen Henry Layard, who in 1840 had become somewhat connected to the British Embassy and the Foreign Office in Constantinople.¹³ Julian Reade clarifies Layard’s early professional life best, stating, “after two years in some of the wildest parts of the Middle East, he became a roving agent attached to the embassy at Constantinople.”¹⁴

⁹ That is, donations made to the museum without the influence of the state government or institutional enterprising. This is a primary idea in Holger Hock. “The British State and the Anglo-French Wars over Antiquities, 1798-1858” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1, Mar. 2007. One such foreign diplomat was Sir William Hamilton (1731-1803), who sent artifacts discovered at Rome and Pompeii to the British Museum.

¹⁰ This scenario of reaping foreign monuments has recently come under the blanket term “informal imperialism”, coined by C.R. Fay in 1940 and popularized by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson in 1953. However, much of the literature on “informal imperialism” deals with “specialized” aspects of European (and particularly, British) colonialism, and is therefore not as pertinent to this study’s investigation. As such, this paper employs the term “artifact imperialism” to denote the specificity of imperialism as it related to archaeology and simply, art. Margarita Diaz-Andreu. *A World History of Nineteenth Century Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 100.

¹¹ Holger Hock. “The British State and the Anglo-French Wars over Antiquities, 1798-1858” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1, Mar., 2007, 53.

¹² One of the most important archaeological emissaries was Sir William Hamilton, who sent artifacts discovered at Rome and Pompeii to the British Museum. For information on Sir William Hamilton’s collecting and his ties to important members in England, please see, Nancy H. Ramage. “Sir William Hamilton as Collector, Exporter, and Dealer: The Acquisition and Dispersal of His Collections”. *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 94, No. 3 (Jul., 1990), pp. 469-480.

¹³ Layard had been trained as a lawyer in the office of his uncle Benjamin Austen. But, after six years practicing, he grew tired of the profession and embarked on a trip which he hoped would ultimately lead him to Ceylon, and to the British Civil Service. However, Layard never made it further than southeastern Asia, and in 1842, found himself in Constantinople.

¹⁴ Julian Reade. *Assyrian Sculpture* (London: British Museum Press, 1998) 9.

What precisely Layard's original job at the Embassy was, is unknown, though in 1841, the "roving agent" appeared in Baghdad, engaged in business with the British Resident there.¹⁵ Later that year, Layard returned to Constantinople, where intent on reporting information, he was "rebuffed" by "a fashionably dressed young gentleman," who took Layard's appearance as a sign of unimportance.¹⁶ Affronted and angry, Layard returned to his hotel, where he booked passage on a ship bound for England. Appeasement would shortly ensue, however, as the Ambassador he had intended to meet, Sir Stratford Canning (1786-1880), sent a letter apologizing for the manner with which Layard had been received. The following day Layard met with Canning, who, after a long discussion, decided that Layard could eventually be of official use to the Embassy. Layard, running out of money, however, explained that he would have to return to England within a few days were he not to be retained. A second letter from Canning, received by Layard on August 10, 1842, officially notes his employment. The letter reads:

Dear Sir,

I think I can see my way to making use of your proffered services. Instead of going away, come & dine with me *tomorrow*, & I will try to arrange a plan with you.

Sincerely Yrs.
S.C.¹⁷

In 1842, Canning dispatched Layard to Turkey, Bosnia and Serbia as a paid traveler —or, as Shawn Malley puts it, "a secret agent" disavowed of all official "charter and mission"— from

¹⁵ Austen Henry Layard. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana and Babylonia, Including a Residence Among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh* (London: John Murray Publishing, 1887). 42-43.

¹⁶ Layard, *Early Adventures*, 373. Gordon Waterfield perhaps puts it best, when he states, "he was unkempt, burnt by the sun, in ill-fitting clothes and his face swollen by tooth ache". Gordon Waterfield. *Layard of Nineveh* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishing, 1963) 90.

¹⁷ From British Library folio 38975, 58-59, dated 10 August 1842. Reprinted in Mogges Trolle Larsen. *The Conquest of Assyria* (New York: Routledge, 1996) 63.

where he sent reports to Canning which “read like an espionage novel.”¹⁸ From this, two conclusions can be drawn: Layard was employed as a spy for the British government; and that well before Layard ventured into Assyria, his interests interwove diplomatic service and foreign culture. For these secret travels, Layard gained some measure of admiration, becoming “a known commodity in the Foreign Office...a British agent.”¹⁹ It is apparent though, that Layard found his goal of a future political career attached to the trajectory of Canning’s. So, when in 1845 Canning prepared to quit Constantinople for a stay in England, it was likely out of self-preservation that Layard devised a plan to remain an agent in the East. “In his autobiography, Layard discusses his career expectations at this juncture”:

I was anxious to find some means of spending my time profitably...I therefore suggested to him [Canning] that I might proceed to Mosul and continue the excavations in the Assyrian ruins, which M. Botta had now abandoned.²⁰

While Canning was a well-respected British foreign diplomat, his political career within the Home Government was less than exceptional.²¹ Yet, born of an old family and related to numerous influential figures, Canning often sought means of advancing his career beyond appointment as *Her Majesty’s Britannic Ambassador to the Ottoman Sultan*.²² For Canning,

¹⁸ Shawn Malley. *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2012) 29. Layard himself reinforces this as he writes, “I was engaged in an important though secret mission”. Layard, *Autobiography and Letters* (London: John Murray Publishing, 1903) 22. The given phrase, “charter and mission” is also found on the same page in *Autobiography*. Waterfield notes the locations to which Layard was sent; *Layard of Nineveh*, 93.

¹⁹ Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2012) 30.

²⁰ Malley, *From Archaeology*, 32. Layard, *Autobiographies and Letters*, 152.

Botta, the Resident in Mosul, had begun archaeological excavations in the area of Nineveh three years previous to Layard. Frederick N. Bohrer. “Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth Century France”. *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Jun., 1998) 342.

²¹ Canning would briefly serve in the House of Commons in 1831, but would return to his Ambassadorial post in Constantinople later in the same year.

²² One such relative was his cousin, Prime Minister George Canning. Though PM for only 119 days due to his death in office, Canning has been described as “the most brilliant and colorful minister, and certainly the greatest orator in

advancement was found in an “association with the national project of acquiring outstanding antiquities.”²³ Canning’s association with the national project was perhaps an inevitable occurrence, as in Constantinople, Canning was surrounded by the experienced wanderer Layard, the Father of Assyriology Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895), the noted Orientalist Charles Allison (1811?-1872), and the antiquarian Charles Newton (1816-1894), as well as a myriad of additional statesmen and diplomats who had fleeting or permanent business in the Porte and its surrounding regions.²⁴

Newton and Rawlinson were both already connected to the British Museum, and provide an early connection between Canning and the British Museum’s involvement in artifact imperialism.²⁵ Canning himself became directly linked to the British Museum sometime around 1842, when he dispatched Allison to Asia Minor for a report on the “feasibility of extricating” some “marble bas-reliefs” from a “crumbling ruin.”²⁶ These marbles were later removed from their ancient confines and accepted by Canning, who “presented all the finds to the Trustees of the British Museum. . . where they were eventually installed...”, becoming known as the “Canning Marbles”.²⁷ It is unclear when Canning made his report to the Trustees, though it seems contemporaneous, if only slightly later, to Layard’s 1845 request to dig in Assyria. What

the government at a time when oratory was still politically important.” Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 10.

²³ Hoock. “The British State and the Anglo-French Wars over Antiquities, 1798-1858”. 66.

²⁴ Allison, is sometimes also written as “Alison”. The “Porte” references the “Sublime Porte”, an allusion to the doorway of the Ottoman Sultan’s Palace door.

²⁵ In 1840, Newton attained a post within the British Museum’s department of antiquities which gave him reason to travel throughout the East. Rawlinson, a former East India Company member, had become an important British agent within the Ottoman Empire, eventually becoming Resident in Baghdad where he continued his nearly lifelong work on deciphering ancient languages and studying archaeological remains. Later, in 1856, Rawlinson was appointed Director of the East India Company.

²⁶ Leo Gerald Byrne. *The Great Ambassador* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1964) 188.

²⁷ Leo Gerald Byrne. *The Great Ambassador* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1964) 188. These marbles were part of the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, one of the ancient wonders of the world. The marbles reached England in 1846. Charles Allison referred to the marbles as the “Canning Marbles” in a letter to Layard. Waterfield. *Layard of Nineveh*, 132.

is clear, however, is that a “private-public partnership” was fully developed between the British State, its emissaries and the British Museum.²⁸ There is no record of an official agreement of patronage between state or Museum sponsors and private individuals, though, by this point, the British Museum had acquired artifacts from Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia with the aid of state resources and state representatives abroad. For Canning and his associates, “filling the British Museum with antiquities was...part of the wider relationship between the state and the arts.”²⁹

²⁸ Hoock. “The British State and the Anglo-French Wars over Antiquities, 1798-1858”.52.

²⁹ Hoock, “The British State and the Anglo-French Wars over Antiquities, 1798-1858”,49.

Chapter II

Austen Henry Layard's 1846 Excavation in Assyria

In the previous chapter, it has been suggested that for England, archaeological undertakings in the nineteenth century were advanced by nationalistic motivations and political sponsorship. These motivations were the direct result of continental competition for the colonization of Mesopotamia, which had begun during the Anglo-French wars in the late eighteenth century. From the ending of the Napoleonic Wars, British Royal Charters such as the East India Company and the Levant Company had remained a potent force in Baghdad and Basra, establishing there large industrial factories and trading bases.³⁰ Driven from Mamluk and Ottoman Iraq's two most important cities, the French, consequently, established their political center north, in the smaller industrial city of Mosul.³¹ It was in this northern region to which Layard's French counterpart, Paul-Émile Botta was sent as Vice-Consul.

Born in 1802 (d. 1870), Botta was nearly fifteen years older than Layard and already well established in various scientific disciplines when he began his work near Mosul.³² Botta's work in Northern Assyria proved rewarding, with his greatest discoveries emanating from the ancient

³⁰ Zaki Saleh. *Origins of British Influence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941). See Chapters I, II and III for a history of Anglo-French competition and predominance in Iraq from the 1790s to 1810.

³¹ In his 1834 *Dictionary of Geography, Ancient and Modern*, Josiah Condor notes that Mosul "is nearly opposite to the immense mounds which mark the site of ancient Nineveh...its present appearance is mean and unresting...its contains about fifty mosques, fourteen churches and one synagogue...Our word muslin is derived from the name of this town. Josiah Condor. *Dictionary of Geography, Ancient and Modern* (London: T. Tegg, 1834) 444.

³² Frederick Bohrer. *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 70.

Botta had been trained as a doctor in France, but had spent much of the 1830's and early 1840's traveling throughout the Middle East working as a naturalist for the French government, and numerous museums and institutions. Previous to his appointment in Mosul, Botta had also received Residence in Egypt, Sennaar, Yemen and Syria. Joseph Bonomi. *Nineveh and its Palaces* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1857) 8.

town of Dur Sharrukin in 1842.³³ These discoveries earned Botta a considerable grant of money from the French government, while his newfound artifacts were immediately dispatched to the Louvre. In 1845, Layard viewed and remarked upon Botta's discoveries as they passed through Constantinople en route to Paris. After viewing the Dur Sharrukin objects, Layard, "wrote a series of articles for *The Malta Times* which were immediately reprinted in English newspapers, such as *The Athenaeum*."³⁴ The articles, and their descriptions of Botta's findings, were rousing to Canning and his associates, with the result being that Layard's request to take up excavations in Assyria was accepted — Layard left for Nimrud later the same month. The discoveries of Botta (and Layard's written remarks) set in motion the Eastern plans of the British State and Museum as the British Embassy in Constantinople, concerned parties within the Home Government and the British Museum all hoped to prevent the French monopolization of artifact discovery and display.³⁵

In November of 1845, outfitted with a £1000 stipend from Canning, Layard arrived at the mounds near the ancient city of Kahlu, in Layard's day called Nimrud.³⁶ South of Botta's camp, Nimrud boasted suitable mounds for excavation and an isolated setting, which afforded Layard a

³³ Dur Sharrukin is approximately 12 miles northeast of Mosul.

³⁴ Frederick Bohrer. *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 114. Returning then to Layard's 1845 letter, it is clearly understood that Layard and Botta were acquainted, if not cordial. How precisely Layard and Botta met is rarely an object of examination, and is therefore vague. Though, it is my opinion that their first meeting likely occurred in 1842, in Mosul, as Layard returned to Constantinople from his travels in Persia or southern Mesopotamia. Botta would have likely just begun excavations, and one finds it probable that Layard, an educated and curious traveller, would have stopped for some discussion with the Frenchman. Several stories would seem to confirm this, including one that notes the two men jointly indulging in opium. Another source of confirmation for an 1842 introduction comes in the spring of 1843, when Botta wrote to Layard; "Come, I pray you, and let us have a little archaeological fun at Khorsabad". Layard would refuse this and subsequent urgings from Botta, though it is obvious that it was to these invitations Layard looked when petitioning Canning. Gordon Waterfield. *Layard of Nineveh* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishing, 1963) 89, 113.

³⁵ I paraphrase Hooek (66) here, "While London-based museum specialists, and diplomats in Constantinople and Mosul all urged that Britain had to prevent the French from monopolizing the field."

³⁶ John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 35. "Kalhu" is the early Assyrian name for the city of Nimrud; biblically, the city was called Calah.

needed measure of surreptitiousness.³⁷ Officially, it was illegal for the English to conduct archaeological activities in Ottoman Iraq, as they had not secured a firman of consent from the Porte.³⁸ Unofficially, it was a point of little contention, as few local residents or Ottoman representatives gave any thought to digging in the various mounds that pockmarked the northern Mesopotamian landscape. “The concept of exploring underground was a novelty. In fact, Mesopotamia, with the exception of Hatra, was never home to extensive recognizable ruins visible to the naked eye, unlike for example, Rome, Athens, Palmyra or Persepolis.”³⁹

The British team began work on the mounds the day after their arrival, discovering chunks of marble, small relief carvings and burnt and colored bricks. Larger objects were found shortly before Christmas, 1845, when Layard’s Arab workers uncovered the crown of a “human-headed winged bull” [Figure 1].⁴⁰ By nightfall, the bull had been completely excavated and its twin had been discovered, with Layard then writing to Canning declaring, “we shall far exceed the French. . .”⁴¹ Layard, accordingly, believed that his discoveries were meaningful enough to justify the dispersal of additional funds. He wrote to Canning on the matter, playing to the Ambassador’s nationalistic inclinations:

The marbles. . . would be in England by next Autumn, long before the French could transport theirs to France. This would be highly credible and give us the priority of

³⁷ Lloyd writes that the locals had become Bedouins under the harsh rule of the then Pasha, and the awful summer heat had withdrawn all who were left to the more temperate hills and river valleys. Seton Lloyd, *Foundations in the dust: a story of Mesopotamian exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947) 111.

³⁸ A firman would arrive a year later, in May of 1846. The firman arrived from Constantinople, signed by the Grand Vizier and addressed to the Governor of Mosul. Waterfield. *Layard of Nineveh*, 141. By comparison, Canning had petitioned the Porte before he removed the marbles from the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. Comparatively, Botta and the French had also been unable to obtain a firman, though they began digs and removed objects with only marginal interference from local authorities.

³⁹ Jean-Louis Hout. “The Importance of Iraq’s Cultural Heritage”. Peter G. Stone. Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly. *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd.) 19. Yet, from Canning, it was still made clear to Layard that he and his team were to act as no more than travelers, interested in surveying the ancient lands.

⁴⁰ Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria* (London: Routledge, 1994), 93.

⁴¹ Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria* (London: Routledge, 1994), 93.

European exhibition, which in these things is almost as important as the priority of discovery.⁴²

After this letter, Canning became more pressing in his solicitation of the Porte for a firman, and of the British Museum for funds. Were these to be issued, Layard's excavations could proceed unhindered, allowing for, as Layard suggested, the outpacing of France in the display of Assyrian artifacts. An, *Illustrated London News* article from 1850 further highlights this notion:

We are told that the French Government is determined to excel us. . . We trust that our Government will not be behind-hand in providing funds for these objects, and that they will prevent not our countrymen abandoning the enterprise for our neighbors. . .⁴³

In 1846, Canning would finally acquire a firman, issued by the Grand Vizier in Constantinople.⁴⁴ The firman, "in Canning's words", allowed Layard the ability "to excavate and export to your [Layard's] heart's content".⁴⁵ The Grand Vizier's issue was followed by a sum of £2,000 (granted by the Trustees of the British Museum), allotted to further Layard's work.⁴⁶ The amount was considerably less than what Layard had hoped for, though it was large enough to

⁴² From Layard's letters, British Library 40637. Folio numbers 30-31 (December 15th, 1845). Reprinted in Malley, *From Archaeology*, 34. Ultimately, this would not be the case, as Canning's delay in sending Layard to Assyria was enough that Botta's discoveries reached the Continent first, in December of 1846.

⁴³ "Shipping of the Great Bull from Nineveh". *Illustrated London News* [London, England] 27 July 1850: 71.

⁴⁴ A selection from the firman reads, "There are . . . in the vicinity of Mosul quantities of stones and ancient remains. There is an English gentleman who has come to those parts to look for stones of this kind, and has found on the banks of the Tigris, in certain uninhabited places, ancient stones on which there are pictures and inscriptions. The British Ambassador has asked that there shall be no obstacles put in the way of the above-mentioned gentleman taking the stones which may be useful to him. . . nor of his embarking them to have them transported to England. The sincere friendship which firmly exists between the two governments makes it desirable that such demands be accepted. . . Therefore no obstacle should be put in the way of his taking the stones which. . . are present in desert places, and are not being utilized; or of his undertaking excavations in uninhabited places where this can be done without inconvenience to anyone; or of his taking such stones as he may wish amongst those which he has been able to discover. John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 35.

⁴⁵ John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 35.

Austen Henry Layard. *Nineveh and its Remains* (New York: Praeger, 1969) 50.

⁴⁶ Frederick Bohrer. *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 105. It is interesting to note that before the allocation of funds to Layard, it is common to find editorials published in different newspapers that call for the governmental financing of Layard's work. Two such editorials are found in *The Times* (London, England) on Tuesday, March 12, 1850, page 8. Another is found in *The Times* on Monday, August 5, 1850, page 8.

extend Layard's "experiments," and to provide him with a greater workforce.⁴⁷ The sum also allowed Layard to begin shipping his early discoveries back to England [Figure 2], which notably included the two giant winged sculptures (now called "Lamassu"), and a lion colossi. The tutelary figures, excavated from the palace of Ashurnasirpal II, arrived in London in June of 1847, and were displayed almost immediately in a small hallway room, positioned to the left of the British Museum's main entrance [Figure 3].⁴⁸ Examining this small hallway room (and its later incarnations) will be the focus of the following section. However, before an investigation at the British Museum commences in chapter four, this study will offer some new evidence regarding a probable display of Assyrian art in British India. This exhibition, held in the Bombay island district of Colabah, possesses the distinction of being the first display of Assyrian artifacts, predating France's display at the Louvre by some weeks, and the British Museum's by six months. Realistically, it should come as no surprise that an Assyrian display occurred in British India during the mid-nineteenth century, as England and India were then inextricably connected. Identifying an early exhibition in Bombay, truthfully, does not change much in the history of British, Near Eastern archeology, though it provides an ironic twist in the study of colonial and post-colonial art history and archaeology. That a colonized country would bear the prestige of displaying its colonizer's greatest archaeological achievement (up to that point) is a curious fact — one that could open up further questions and investigations into the historiography of archaeology. Margarita Diaz-Andreu argues that archaeology "is not a value-free and neutral social science", and that only when the social framework around archaeological discovery is

⁴⁷ Gordon Waterfield, *Layard of Nineveh*, 165.

⁴⁸ Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 74. An investigation of this small room, sometimes called the "room of miscellany", will be given in Chapter IV.

investigated, can a “deconstructive history” become possible.⁴⁹ In investigating the Colabah exhibit, a certain deconstruction can occur, one that denotes the socio-political history of art in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁹ Margarita Diaz-Andreu. *A World History of Nineteenth Century Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 4.

Chapter III

Assyrian Display in British India: 1846

While it is commonly thought that the first English exhibition of Assyrian artifacts occurred within the British Museum in 1847, a newly discovered primary source from British India may indicate otherwise. From an article entitled “Sculptures from Nineveh”, published in the Indian, English language newspaper, *The Friend of India*, it now appears that some Assyrian subjects were diverted from England, and were sent to Colabah, an island within the district of Bombay, British India, and displayed there in December, 1846.⁵⁰ The article itself is short and unassuming, even as it bears the distinction of reporting on what was likely the first exhibition of Assyrian objects known to the modern western world. Indeed, the largest portion of the article is merely a list of the objects displayed [Figure 4]. Distant in time, space and content from concurrent (and later) articles published in England, the *Friend of India* article gives little nationalist rhetoric, and nearly passes over Layard’s accomplishments, as it simply mentions his “interesting work, now being prosecuted. . .”⁵¹ Instead, the article focuses on three things: a proposed Persian history of the objects; the governmental granting of funds for continued archaeological excavation; and the British, East India Company Resident in Baghdad, Henry Rawlinson.

The article begins by stating that during the previous week a notice was taken out in the “advertising columns” highlighting the arrival and display of sculptures from Nineveh.⁵² The

⁵⁰ “Sculptures from Nineveh.” *The Friend of India* [Calcutta, India] 31 December 1846: 839. Gale Digital Archive. Web. 20 September 2014. *The Friend of India*, is now called *The Statesman*.

⁵¹ “Sculptures from Nineveh.” *The Friend of India* [Calcutta, India] 31 December 1846: 839. Gale Digital Archive. Web. 20 September 2014.

⁵² The line reads, “It will be observed from a notice which appears in our advertising columns, that the sculptures from the site of ancient Nineveh, to which we directed attention last week, will be on view, from this day at Colabah”. “Sculptures from Nineveh”. *The Friend of India* [Calcutta, India] 31 December 1846: 839. Gale Digital

article continues, stating, “we have been favoured with the following list of antiquities.”⁵³ The following lines may provide some illumination, they read:

The *dresses* of the figures resemble, we understand, in a strong degree, those of Persepolis; and there can be little doubt that they belong to the second race of Assyrian Kings, whose power was subverted by B.C. 608. . .⁵⁴

In the opening sentence, it is noted that someone has explained that a comparative resemblance exists between the Colabah-displayed Assyrian subjects, and those from Persepolis. This paper proposes that this was the Assyriologist, Henry Rawlinson, and that his ties to the East India Company, and in turn its ties to Colabah and Bombay, were the primary reason for the display in British India. Rawlinson possessed firsthand knowledge of similar objects and aesthetics, and as the preeminent Persian scholar of the day, would have been qualified to give the published judgments.⁵⁵ Previous to his time in Baghdad, Rawlinson spent much of his East India Company service in Persia, and in 1835 “found himself posted to Kermanshah”, where he visited, observed and made copies of the *Behistun Inscription*.⁵⁶ A decorated carving likely constructed during the reign of Darius the Great (6th century BCE), the figures in the *Behistun Inscription* bare

Archive.Web. 20 September 2014. The articles reference to the previous week could mean either the week of Sunday, December 20 to Sunday December 27, or from Thursday December 24 to Thursday December 31.

⁵³ “Sculptures from Nineveh”. The Friend of India [Calcutta, India] 31 December 1846: 839. Gale Digital Archive.Web. 20 September 2014. This would seem accurate as there is no record of archaeological sponsorship arising from British India.

⁵⁴ “Sculptures from Nineveh,” The Friend of India [Calcutta, India] 31 December 1846: 839. Gale Digital Archive.Web. 20 September 2014.

⁵⁵ From the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, “He outdistanced all his contemporaries in acquisition of Persian...vernacular....from 1833-1839..he undertook tours in...Persian Kurdistan”. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/23190>. Rawlinson served as an East India Company soldier in Persia and India, returning there frequently from his postings in the Middle East. Rawlinson was also offered several jobs by the British Foreign Government in India, though he never accepted them. Regarding Cuneiform, there was likely no one better than Rawlinson.

⁵⁶ Seton Lloyd, *Foundations*, 79. Kermanshah is approximately twenty-two miles south of the *Behistun Inscription*, and therefore within easy horse ride.

remarkable resemblance to the figural Assyrian reliefs discovered by Layard and his workers.⁵⁷

Figures present in the *Behistun Inscription* and in relief work that Layard discovered are comparable in regards to their staggered walking stance and in the sloping cut and incised ornamentation of their dress. Figures appearing in the *Behistun Inscription* and in Layard's discoveries also display similar beard and hair features, though these are more commonplace and found throughout this period's art.

When examining the list of Assyrian objects displayed in Colabah, provided in the *Friend of India* article, several interesting observations can be made. First, that twenty-eight pieces are figural or representative, while twenty more are either cuneiform tablets, or objects which are noted as displaying cuneiform inscription. This nearly equal ratio of figural work to cuneiform inscribed objects provides another link to Rawlinson.⁵⁸ Though of repute for playing a role in reforming the Persian Army, and for his own military service in Persian Kurdistan (Kandahar), Rawlinson became well known throughout the East India Company and Foreign Office for his knowledge of Persian and Indian dialects, and his ultimate deciphering of several ancient cuneiform languages.⁵⁹ In 1840, when Rawlinson settled into his East India Company post in Baghdad, he was likely the foremost ancient, Eastern linguist in the world. No scholar could yet read Assyrian cuneiform, though during his time in Kermanshah, the 1830's, Rawlinson had

⁵⁷ The relief carving displayed on the *Behistun Inscription* is quite similar to many of the figural bas-reliefs that Layard discovered in Nimrud. The Achaemenid and Assyrian subjects bear resemblance in clothing, hair and beard style and in stance. Rawlinson's analysis of the cuneiform inscribed *Behistun Inscription*, was pivotal in his later ability to translate the cuneiform writing of the Elamites and the Babylonians, and thus was crucial to his Resident-time excavations of cuneiform tablets in and around Baghdad.

⁵⁸ It is routinely seen through letters and other writings that Rawlinson implored Layard and the British Museum to focus on excavating cuneiform tablets, and not artistic artifacts.

⁵⁹ From the East India Company, Rawlinson received "early promotion" and was recognized as "an exceptional linguist". Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/23190>

begun to translate Old Persian, Babylonian and Elamite, languages which are all familial in some ways to Akkadian, the Assyrian script.⁶⁰ Referencing this, the *Friend of India* article states:

By last account, Major Rawlinson was making satisfactory progress towards deciphering the Babylonian and Assyrian characters; ere long, therefore, we may expect to unlock these hidden treasures.⁶¹

Since cuneiform was still indecipherable, objects displaying cuneiform inscription were not originally well received by the British Museum. According to Mogges Trolle Larsen, in *The Conquest of Assyria*, it would appear that that objects displaying cuneiform may not have been considered art by the British Museum, and were therefore not displayed in the Museum's art galleries. Larsen writes, "philological and literary studies were well-established as a most respectable pursuit . . . the effort to decipher the cuneiform scrip was always referred to under the rubric Literary Studies."⁶² The large accumulation of textual objects included in the Colabah exhibit could, therefore, denote an Assyrian display orchestrated by a person who possessed particularly, text-oriented concerns.

Furthermore, the article mentions that sometime after the British Museum dispersed their sum of £2,000 to Layard, the Royal Geographic Society of London gave an additional, "handsome donation of £1,000", to further Layard's work.⁶³ This dispersion of funds is intriguing, as in referring to the Royal Geographic Society, the article mentions an entity which was responsible for publishing Rawlinson's work, but otherwise appears somewhat absent from

⁶⁰ Russell states, "In 1847, no one in the world could read Assyrian cuneiform". John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 28.

⁶¹ "Sculptures from Nineveh," *The Friend of India* [Calcutta, India] 31 December 1846: 839. Gale Digital Archive. Web. 20 September 2014.

⁶² Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria*, 146.

⁶³ "Sculptures from Nineveh". *The Friend of India* [Calcutta, India] 31 December 1846: 839. Gale Digital Archive. Web. 20 September 2014.

later commentary on the Assyrian discoveries.⁶⁴ Accordingly, it appears that Rawlinson had some degree of influence or input on the Colabah exhibition. Rawlinson himself was a member of the Bombay Army division of the East India Company, and owed much of his success to John Malcolm, previous East India Company envoy to Persia, governor of Bombay from 1827-1831, and longtime personal mentor.⁶⁵

Far from London and far from the British Museum, this first display of Assyrian work provides a sharp contrast, institutionally and contextually, to the display that would occur in England a year later.⁶⁶ Yet, the original objective and orchestration of the Colabah exhibition is still unknown, and will likely remain so without the emergence of further primary sources detailing the exhibition in British India. However, what is clear is that the display of Assyrian art in British India served as a resounding example of imperial power; that England could display objects from a newfound civilization, in another location that was then colonized by them, can be seen as a direct result of the imperium of the British Empire. Archaeology and artifact display, “thus acted as a an instrument of power, legitimizing the hegemony of the imperial centers over subaltern countries.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Rawlinson was published twice in the 1840 edition of the *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society of London*. Rawlinson would also later become president of the Royal Geographic Society, from 1874-1875. For an address on Rawlinson given to the Royal Geographic Society, see George Bellas Greenough, *Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London delivered at the Anniversary meeting on the 27th May, 1840* (Digitized by the British Library, August 20, 2014).

⁶⁵ George Rawlinson. *A memoir of Major-General Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898), 23-24. See page 14 for more on Malcolm.

⁶⁶ In early 1848, the *Times* reported that several cases of Assyrian sculptures were irreparably damaged on their way to London via Bombay. Given the date of damage and newspaper report, it is quite possible that these artifacts were those included in the Colabah exhibition, especially considering that the *Times* notes that they were “seen” intact in Bombay, but not in London. THE ASSYRIAN ANTIQUITIES. *The Times* (London, England), Monday, Oct 30, 1848; pg. 5; Issue 20007

⁶⁷ John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 210.

Part II

Introduction

Preferential Aesthetics at the British Museum

The previous chapters have highlighted the archaeological excavations and social circumstances, which led to Austen Henry Layard and the British uncovering ancient objects in the Assyrian mounds surrounding Nimrud. In the following chapters, however, this study will look closely at the displays of Layard's discoveries at the British Museum. These chapters will examine how the newly discovered ancient objects were displayed, their physical and hierarchical positioning within the British Museum, the changing nature of their interpretation, and will reconstruct the exhibits, a relatively unique endeavor.⁶⁸ To begin, though, some understanding of the aesthetic and theoretical issues surrounding the insertion of the Assyrian objects into London, and within the British Museum, must be given.

Nearly two millennia had passed since the remnants of Assyria had last been uncovered, and by the time of its physical presentation at the British Museum in 1847, the Museum and the public were anxiously waiting to see the objects — they were, however, wholly unprepared to visually and ideologically interact with the artifacts with which they were presented. This was primarily a result of two problems; the first being that only very general facts regarding Assyria were known, and the second being internal dissension at the British Museum concerning what the intrinsic value of the Assyrian objects was, and as such, how to display them. Regarding the first problem, Layard himself reiterated this point in the preface of his immensely popular 1849 book, *Nineveh and its Remains*, stating:

⁶⁸ Authors such as Frederick Bohrer, Shawn Malley and Mogges Trolle Larsen have completed fine studies of the events surrounding the modern, British archaeological excavations in Assyrian and the objects introduction into Victorian England. However, these studies were not conducted with the explicit intention of examining specific objects included in the different British Museum displays.

Although the names of Nineveh and Assyria have been familiar to us from childhood. . . It is only when we ask ourselves what we really know concerning them, that we discover our ignorance of all that relates to the history, and even to their geographical position.⁶⁹

Larsen notes that “the public had only a very limited understanding of his [Layard’s] discoveries” and “even the Trustees” had little knowledge of Assyria.⁷⁰ The knowledge, which the public and the Trustees (and their associates at the Museum) did possess, came from important cultural sources such as Byron’s 1821 opus, *Sardanapalus*, John Martin’s 1828-1829 painting, *The Fall of Nineveh*, or the Bible.⁷¹ These were sources which treated Assyria, and the broader Eastern world, as a fantastical space; from these sources, the British public learned how imperium mixed with cataclysm to construct a legendary world which was not so different from their own. The problem however, was that ancient Assyria did look different from the Victorian world; Byron’s spirited visualization of historic events bore no resemblance to Layard’s Assyrian art objects, and architecture from Assyria did not look like the Westernized pillars and geometric temples of Martin’s rendering. Yet, these Classical and historical elements were the linchpins of aesthetic philosophy, which pervaded throughout the intellectually discerning public and British Museum; the Classical preference was authoritative, and held to be the perfect ideal of art.⁷²

Previous to the Assyrian objects, the British Museum’s greatest acquisition had been the Parthenon Marbles, harvested from the Acropolis by Thomas Bruce, Lord Elgin in 1801.⁷³ These

⁶⁹ Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849) xx.

⁷⁰ Mogges Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 146.

⁷¹ This notion plays a crucial role in the analysis presented in Part III, and will as such be examined more thoroughly there.

⁷² Henry Ladd notes, “. . . historical painting which with the most literary literalness was held to be the ideal art. . . the historical manner became authoritative”. *The Victorian Morality of Art* (New York: Ray Long and Richard Smith, 1932) 22-23.

⁷³ For further information regarding the Elgin Marbles, please see: William St. Clair. *Lord Elgin and his Marbles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Theodore Vrettos. *The Elgin Affair: The Abduction of Antiquity's Greatest Treasures and the Passions it Aroused* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

antiquities, along with Egyptian works presented to the Museum from Henry Salt, Consul in Egypt, aided in transitioning the Museum from its location in Montague House to its contemporary location on Great Russell Street. When Parliament had delivered Lord Elgin's marbles to the British Museum in 1816, there was no question as to whether they were art, or how they specifically fit into the overall survey of the British Museum's collection of antiquities. Or indeed, what type of patron would observe and appreciate them; they were Classical art, and they needed to be displayed.

As Athens had expanded Greece, London had furthered the British Empire through seafaring trade and war, discovery and colonization.⁷⁴ As a symbol of Western culture, the Parthenon Marbles brought artistic, political and intellectual attributes to the British Museum, and marked it as an educative institution and an international revealer of culture.⁷⁵ The Parthenon Marbles fell directly in line with the Museum's preference for Neoclassical aesthetics, and quickly "brought admiration and respect for the Greek achievement" to England.⁷⁶ Echoing this, an 1826 British Museum guidebook famously stated that, "Greek art has intrinsic merit, which speaks for itself."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Debbie Challis notes, "the Parthenon Sculptures, being original sculptures from 5th century Athens, represent the power of a sea-faring ancient Greek city, an empire and a free state. "The Parthenon Sculptures: Emblems of British national identity". *The British Art Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2006), p.34. David Sacks has said that, "It was by sea that Athens became great. . .". Clearly England (led by those in London) became great in the same way during the late 18th century and early 19th century, as it could be said that battles at sea with Napoleon, seafaring trade with the East India Company and other Royal Charters and Caribbean colonization marked the British Empire as the world's premier. "Ships and seafaring in ancient Greece." *Encyclopedia of the Ancient Greek World*, Revised Edition. Revised by Lisa R. Brody. (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2005)

⁷⁵ For more information on this, please see, Gillian Perry. Colin Cunningham. *Academies, Museums, and Canons of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 73-78.

⁷⁶ John Henry Merryman. Albert Edward Elsen. *Law, Ethics, and the Visual Arts* (South Holland: Kluwer Law International, 2002) 286.

⁷⁷ Inderpal Grewal. "Constructing National Subjects: The British Museum and Its Guidebooks". *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). ed. Lisa Bloom. 46

Apart from this guidebook quote, an early example of the respect for which those within the British Museum had for the Classical tradition can be seen in Archibald Archer's 1819 painting entitled, *The Temporary Elgin Room* [Figure 5].⁷⁸ Archer's painting provides an interior look at the first display of Elgin's marbles, and can thus stand in comparative reference to the displays of Assyrian art in the 1840s and 1850s. Spatially, the room in which the Parthenon Marbles were first displayed was large and lavish and constructed specifically to display the Athenian antiquities. The room appears to be of geometric construction, with a bay featured at one end. The bay area displays several sculptures: a headless, seated female figure, a headless, standing male nude, a headless, seated female clothed in a sloping, skin-clinging garment and a smaller indiscernible upright sculpture. The walls, painted drab, feature several dentils, which are spaced intermittently and display metope reliefs. On the bottom of the wall a frame at chair-rail height encases a running frieze, which appears to be the famed, "equestrian frieze".

The floor of Archer's *Temporary Elgin Room* is dominated by two reclining nude sculptures whose luminous monochrome enhances their position in the painting. The floor also holds a Krater and a disembodied equestrian head in relief. On the left, an artist's easel and toolbox litter the floor, while on the right, a sketchbook lays opened, forgotten and splayed against the disincorporate horse head. Erudite looking men surround the reclining nude sculptures, and are shown together deep in conversation, study and notation. The men are emotively somber, though small smiles and hand gestures belie a hidden sense of excitement and admiration; it is clear that these men gaze in wonder at what is before and around them. In the middle of the group sits Benjamin West, the American-born artist who, at the time of Archer's painting, was

⁷⁸ The British Museum website lists the painting as being completed in 1819, though they list Archibald Archer as being born in 1820. I believe that the British Museum has listed the life dates of the politician Archibald Archer, and not the artist Archibald Archer, who lived from 1791-1848.

the president of the Royal Academy of Arts.⁷⁹ Engaged in conversation, the painting's inclusion of West serves as a tangible connection between the ideas of the Royal Academy and the early nineteenth century contents of the British Museum.⁸⁰ Upon seeing Elgin's marbles, West purportedly stated that they demonstrated, "the mental impression which is so essentially to be given to works of refined art."⁸¹

Archer's painting seems to highlight West's sentiment, as the turn of the Academic's seated body exactly mirrors the posture and turn of the reclining nude behind him. In the background of the painting, several women can be seen. Dressed in shades of red, the women in Archer's painting are all closely joined to men, and appear to be unconcerned with the various nude sculptures, preferring instead to examine the lengths of running frieze and partially clothed figures. This would seem to reflect the day's Academic decorum, where it was deemed inappropriate for women to appraise the nude male form. Academic indicators can be found throughout Archer's painting, underlining the ideological connection between fine art of the Nineteenth Century, the Academy and the British Museum.

The Academy, which "had a virtual monopoly on public taste", possessed "a standard of ancient Classical art, the European tradition and historical subjects" which, "retained sway through the nineteenth century. . . and was sustained in the West from the 1850s."⁸² In Layard's day, this standard was effused by none more than Richard Westmacott, previously an instructor

⁷⁹ Eric Gidal. *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2001) 142.

⁸⁰ Seated next to West is Joseph Planta, Principal Librarian of the British Museum. Eric Gidal. *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2001) 142.

⁸¹ John Galt. *The Life of Benjamin West*, (London, 1820) 107. Reprinted in Gidal, *Poetic Exhibitions, Romantic Aesthetics*, 131.

⁸² Jason Rosenfeld. "The Salon and The Royal Academy in the Nineteenth Century". *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/sara/hd_sara.htm

at the Royal Academy, who often designed exhibit installations for the British Museum, which Frederick Bohrer notes were, “largely based on an idealization of the traditional classical cannon.”⁸³ In the early 1850s, Westmacott designed a sculpture for the pediment of the Museum’s south entrance called *Progress of Civilisation* [Figure 6]. Reflecting the Museum’s Greek Revival architecture, Westmacott’s sculpture was designed to project outwardly, what Museum goers would find within.⁸⁴ Beginning with a “creation of man” scene, and ending with a depiction of “man gaining knowledge of music and poetry”, Westmacott’s sculpture display’s idealized human forms and enlightenment symbols in a distinctly historicist tradition.⁸⁵ Perhaps most pertinent to this study’s discussion is the portion of the sculpture which portrays the “invention of architecture, sculpture and painting” [Figure 7].⁸⁶ Displaying three Classically dressed female figures (who hold a paint brush, a palette and a level) positioned in front of a Doric column, the intention is clear; art and its history are inseparably linked to the Classical age.⁸⁷ This personification of culture, which began with the Elgin Marble’s, furthered an era of classificatory standards of “value” and “art” within the British Museum. Such a system allowed for the grouping together of certain culturally and intellectually preferred artworks.

This idea of preferential aesthetics may provide some insight into the British Museum’s construction of the 1847 Assyrian display. From primary source documents, as well as from more modern observers, it is known that the English public was interested in viewing and remarking upon Layard’s discoveries from almost the outset of their arrival in London. Yet, those within the British Museum (notably, but not exclusively, the Trustees) were unsure as to

⁸³ Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 112.

⁸⁴ http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/architecture/south_pediment.aspx

⁸⁵ http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/architecture/south_pediment.aspx

⁸⁶ http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/architecture/south_pediment.aspx

⁸⁷ http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/architecture/south_pediment.aspx

the aesthetic value and intellectual merit of the Assyrian objects, and were accordingly hesitant to display them prominently.⁸⁸ A report from the 1847 Royal Commission, convened to investigate the practices of display and management of the British Museum, highlights this best, stating:

At this moment the monuments discovered and explored by Mr. Layard on the site of ancient Nineveh are yet in a place of temporary deposit, which as such, and for the present, fulfills to a satisfactory extent the desire which the Trustees have manifested to gratify the just curiosity of the public . . . Those [Assyrian Artifacts] already received have attracted such general attention, their archaeological value and their general character as acquisitions to a national museum are so far beyond cavil, that any expression of our approbation of measures calculated to render the collection more complete, could scarcely add authority to that of the public voice.⁸⁹

This quote, which arises from a commissioned report systematically detailing “the failings” in the British Museum, would seem to suggest that a disparity existed between how the artifacts were displayed within the British Museum, and the admiration, which they were given by the public. And, though it is likely too speculative to question whether there was some form of plot hatched to purposefully devalue the Assyrian subjects and to keep them away from the viewing public, truthfully, there may have been, as Frederick Bohrer notes that “Assyria had powerful detractors among the museum trustees.”⁹⁰ Yet, in many ways, blame cannot be assigned solely to the Trustees for their original feelings on the Assyrian artifacts: the initial reduction of the intrinsic value believed to exist within the Assyrian objects was strictly culturally hegemonic.

⁸⁸ A similar occurrence had transpired earlier in the 1840s when Charles Fellow, himself like Layard sponsored by the British Museum, had recovered Greek artifacts from Asia Minor, termed “Lycian”. Due to their Classical association, the Lycian sculptures were readily accepted by the British Museum as valuable works of art. Yet, as a result of their nonclassical origin, the Lycian finds were mounted and displayed high on a wall, where they could only variously be seen. Bohrer, in fact, notes that they were displayed with an effect, “highlighting the most classicized features among them”. Frederick Bohrer. *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 112.

⁸⁹ Frederick Bohrer. *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 113.

⁹⁰ Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 113.

Those who directed the British Museum (the Trustees, the curators and the exhibit designers) were all members of a cultural elite, who, according to Chris Wingfield were, “recipients of Classical education, and frequently also of noble birth” and “understood themselves as inheritors of an ancient tradition of civilization.”⁹¹

Accordingly, the Trustees and their associates possessed the social station and socio-cultural capital necessary to ensure that their desired, Classical, artistic and aesthetic preference, would be agencies which existed inside of their institution.⁹² Indeed, by Layard’s day, institutional criticism was “out of line with the popular taste.”⁹³ This was likely of little concern, however, as in the 1840s, it was still the British Museum’s overall mission to exist as a place which catered to the pleasure of the intellectually and culturally discerning public, which existed primarily in circles of aristocracy and affluence, and were similar to the Trustees and Museum directors themselves. While this position was changing, as “new interest in the discovery of antique treasures” had an impact on the notions of what should be considered “valuable” or even worthwhile art, a greater enfranchisement of patrons was not yet prevalent, and the approbation of a changing aesthetic cannon was still on the distant horizon.⁹⁴ As such, placed against the backdrop of the collectivist and historicist museological framework of the British Museum, it would have been largely impossible to display the Assyrian artifacts with the same prestige and valuation as Classical or Classically associated works; the ancient objects which arrived from

⁹¹ Chris Wingfield. *Placing Britain in the British Museum*. ed. Simon Knell, Peter Aronsson, Arne Bugge Amundsen. *National Museums: New Studies from Around the World* (New York: Routledge, 2014) 126.

⁹² This is a basic tenant of Pierre Bourdieu’s celebrated work, *La Distinction*, which in its section, “The Aristocracy of Culture”, supposes that taste and preference are determinants created by those in power, and that physical or intellectual access to that taste or preference is determined exclusively by social positioning. Pierre Bourdieu. *La Distinction* (New York: President and Fellows of Harvard College and Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1984).

⁹³ Henry Ladd, *Victorian Morality of Art*, “by 1840, criticism was out of line with popular taste”, 40. Ladd here speaks of criticism from Academics, institutions and nobility/aristocracy.

⁹⁴ Henry Ladd, *Victorian Morality of Art*, 41.

Assyria were not yet universally valued by those whom directed the British Museum, or to whom it catered.

This attitude would eventually change, spurred on by an almost unrelenting public affinity for the Assyrian objects. Public exposure to the Assyrian objects, notably through the new press (which in the late 1830s and early 1840s had become much cheaper to print and purchase) and the newly marketable magazine, popularized the Assyrian discoveries as art objects worthy of fascination, in ways, which had theretofore been unseen. An increase in popular society appears to have had an enormous effect on the way that the Assyrian artifacts were viewed. The British Museum itself would enjoy the consequences of this, as it, institutionally, experienced a record number of admissions in every year which display of the Assyrian objects was augmented or changed.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ This notion is more thoroughly investigated in Chapter VI.

Chapter IV

Assyrian Display at the British Museum: 1847

Not much is known about the British Museum's original display of Assyrian artifacts; Layard's discoveries were not included in the 1847 edition of the *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum*.⁹⁶ Reasons for the ancient discoveries initially remaining understated are diverse, as "compared to what would follow," this phase was relatively low-key.⁹⁷ From changing attitudes about Museum admission, to the preferential treatment of certain objects inside the institution, the first display of Assyrian art at the British Museum was impacted greatly by social determinants of its day. One particular situation that impacted the Museum's first display was that Layard was not involved. As the Assyrian artifacts arrived in London in June, the same month that Layard left Nineveh, the archaeological emissary was not involved in the display's construction. As the original champion of Assyria, both physically and philosophically, Layard could have played a crucial role in forming an early opinion on the Assyrian artifacts. Between 1845 and 1846, Layard wrote several public and private letters that outlined his belief in the superiority of Assyrian art (notably to that of Egyptian origin), and his feeling that in England, the Assyrian works possessed no aesthetic equivalent.⁹⁸ Yet, others, such as Richard Westmacott

⁹⁶ The *Synopsis* was the basic visitors guidebook to the British Museum, and was arranged in chapters by departmental contents. It is possible that the Assyrian artifacts had not yet arrived at the time of the *Synopsis* printing.

⁹⁷ John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 36.

⁹⁸ In an 1845 article published in the *Athenaeum*, Layard notes, "The Assyrian sculptures are immeasurably superior to the still and ill-proportioned figures of the monuments of the Pharaohs. They discover a knowledge of the anatomy of the human frame, a remarkable perception of character, and wonderful spirit in the outlines and general execution. In fact, the great gulf which separates barbarian from civilized art has been passed". While similarly, in an 1846 personal letter, Layard writes, that: "[The Assyrians] knowledge of art is surprising, and greatly superior to that of any contemporary nation. . .we have no equivalent". Austen Henry Layard, *Athenaeum*, 1845. Reprinted in John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 37. Austen

(and the Assyriologist Henry Rawlinson) were conversely of the opinion that, “if we had one-tenth part of what we have of Nineveh art, it would be quite enough . . . for it is very bad art,” and that, “I still think the Nineveh marbles are not valuable as works of art. . . I do so merely because your winged God is not the Apollo Belvedere.”⁹⁹

It is possible, therefore, to see how Layard’s noninvolvement was pivotal in the Assyrian object’s initial display. Had Layard been present to provide insight into the historic and aesthetic nature of his Assyrian discoveries (as he had in Paris in 1846), the British Museum’s display might have been different.¹⁰⁰ As it was, Layard, upon his visit to the 1847 Assyrian display, “complained that they [Assyrian artifacts] were placed in such an awkward spot that they could hardly be seen.”¹⁰¹ This “awkward spot,” was a small room in a hallway adjacent to the Russell Street entrance of the British Museum, which could be accessed by entering the Museum’s Great Hall and turning immediately to the left. Frederick Bohrer has called this room, the “room of miscellany” [Figure 8], as along with Layard’s objects, the room displayed an assortment of Classical and Egyptian objects, and was stationed within the larger system of galleries dedicated to Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Norman art.¹⁰² Specifically, the “room of miscellany” was positioned anterior to the entrances of the Egyptian and Classical galleries, and to the collections of Lord Elgin (1766-1841) and Charles Townley (1737-1805).¹⁰³

Henry Layard. *Austen Henry Layard, Autobiography and Letters*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1903), vol. 2, 166-67, March 22, 1846.

⁹⁹ From the British Parliamentary Papers 1853b: 638-639. Reprinted in John Malcolm Russell. *From Nineveh to New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 38. Waterfield, *Layard of Nineveh*, 147-148. From a letter written by Rawlinson to Layard.

¹⁰⁰ For an account of Layard’s stay and lecture in Paris, see “Mr. Layard’s Assyrian Discoveries”. *The Watchman*, January 26, 1848, Issue 682, pg. 45.

¹⁰¹ Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria*, 141.

¹⁰² Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 114.

¹⁰³ Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 114.

From sources published in 1847, it is difficult to reconstruct a comprehensive list of what artifacts were displayed; there are simply not enough newspapers, journals or periodicals which report on the Assyrian artifacts in their display context. However, some sources do provide insight into the type of objects presented for display. One such source is a November 1847 edition of the *Leicester Chronicle*, which foreshadows the British Museum's first display. Written by a French correspondent, the *Leicester Chronicle* declares, "...the British government is about to present you... numerous fragments of arms and utensils in bronze and ivory which will enrich your British Museum with invaluable documents; and...that splendid black marble obelisk."¹⁰⁴ This short statement provides what is perhaps the clearest, earliest, primary source description of objects included in the British Museum's initial display of Assyrian objects. In referring to "that splendid black marble obelisk", the article is plainly noting the incorporation of the now famed, Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III [Figure 9].

The article's description of the Assyrian display presenting "fragments of arms and utensils" is common, and found in numerous other period sources; an article from the Wesleyan centered newspaper, *The Watchman*, portrays this best.¹⁰⁵ The article, nearly one thousand words long, reports that Layard has uncovered magnificent artifacts which show images of powerful kings and empires and hypothesizes about religious, civic and social life in ancient Assyria. The article concludes, "a small portion of which [Layard's discoveries] have already arrived, and have been placed in the British Museum."¹⁰⁶ A similar conclusion can be found in a *Times* article that declares several important bas-reliefs were displayed which, "led to some very interesting

¹⁰⁴ "Remarkable Discoveries in the Vicinity of Ancient Nineveh". *The Leicester Chronicle* (Leicester, England), Saturday, November 13, 1847; Issue 1928. It is interesting to note, however, that to this point, no sources showing or describing the Black Obelisk's inclusion in the room of miscellany have been found.

¹⁰⁵ "Mr. Layard's Assyrian Discoveries," *The Watchman* (London, England), January 26, 1848, Issue 682

¹⁰⁶ "Mr. Layard's Assyrian Discoveries," *The Watchman* (London, England), January 26, 1848, Issue 682

conversations.”¹⁰⁷ Apart from these, it is difficult to determine precisely what Assyrian artifacts were present in the room of miscellany, though another *Times* article asserts that by the end of June, 1847, Layard had discovered “above 60” sculptures from Nimrud, which he labeled a “good collection.”¹⁰⁸ This “collection” included the famed human headed winged-bull and lion, which Layard believed would adorn the entranceway of an “Assyrian Museum” or “Hall of Nineveh” in London.¹⁰⁹ It would seem, however, that in the “room of miscellany” there was little room for the colossal beasts, and they were instead put into storage upon their arrival in London nearly a year later.¹¹⁰

This idea of space raises an interesting point; the physical space of the room of miscellany. In, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, Bohrer notes that the room of miscellany was in fact a corridor, and not actually recognized as an object gallery.¹¹¹ In examining the *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* from 1848, however, it would seem that the corridor was actually quite large, as the *Synopsis* notes five display “compartments,” which contain objects of mixed origin. Many of the objects included in the room of miscellany were small, as the *Synopsis* often describes Roman and Greek busts and heads, Egyptian tablets and small votive bowls and reliefs.¹¹² Yet, there appears to have been a profusion of larger objects as well, as the *Synopsis*

¹⁰⁷ “MR. LAYARD'S DISCOVERIES”. *The Times* (London, England), Saturday, Jun 19, 1847; pg. 6; Issue 19580.

¹⁰⁸ “Mr. Layard’s Progress at Nimrood and Mosul”. *The Times* (London, England) Monday, June 28, 1847; pg. 7; Issue 19587.

¹⁰⁹ “Mr. Layard’s Progress at Nimrood and Mosul”. *The Times* (London, England) Monday, June 28, 1847; pg. 7; Issue 19587.

¹¹⁰ An article entitled “Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum” from *The Lady’s Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday, January 12, 1850; Issue 159, makes it clear that certain objects had been held in storage and were not displayed in the room of miscellany. Also, as apparently no newspaper articles report on the giant winged-bull and lion, it would seem that they were not displayed.

¹¹¹ Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 114.

¹¹² Interestingly, many of these objects came from Sir William Hamilton, the aforementioned British emissary in Italy.

notes the presence of several sarcophagi and altars, a few more substantial sculptures (which the *Synopsis* calls “monuments”) and a glass case that contained over thirty objects.¹¹³

The room must have been quite large, as the 1848 *Synopsis* notes that “along the south wall of this room are temporarily deposited a series of sculptured slabs found by Mr. Layard in an excavation made by him at Nimroud, the supposed site of the ancient Nineveh . . . these reliefs lined the interior of a chamber. . .to the height of ten feet from the ground. . .”¹¹⁴ The *Synopsis* offers that the room of miscellany contained eleven slabs (eight called “Tall Slabs” and three called “Long Slabs”) total, which displayed imagery described as: “assault of a city”, “a monarch in his chariot”, “warriors in chariot”, “bull hunt”, “lion hunt”, “an Assyrian monarch, accompanied by four guards, receiving a procession of four persons”, “an Assyrian monarch accompanied by his suite”, “an eagle headed deity” [Figure 10], “another winged deity” [Figure 11], and “fragment from the top of a large slab.”¹¹⁵ Deposited amongst the iconic, naturalistic busts of Greek deities and Roman leaders, these winged, humanoid figures of Eastern construct must have looked quite out of place.¹¹⁶

Another important selection from the 1847 *Synopsis* to consider is its opening statement regarding the Assyrian reliefs, which notes that the slabs are “temporarily deposited.”¹¹⁷ This presents an intriguing point of analysis as the 1848 *Synopsis* was published a year after the initial arrival and display of Layard’s discoveries. The question arises, therefore, as to whether the Assyrian artifacts were already becoming popular enough to warrant their own gallery, or

¹¹³ The British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: R. & A. Taylor, 1848) 102.

¹¹⁴ The British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: R. & A. Taylor, 1848) 104.

¹¹⁵ The British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: R. & A. Taylor, 1848) 104.

¹¹⁶ Currently, within the British Museum, there exist slab reliefs which resemble these descriptions (and other, later given) that measure ten feet high (as the *Synopsis* states) and over five feet long. As such, the space dedicated to the Assyrian objects (a portion of the “south wall”) must have been comparatively large. Other similar objects are smaller, though even the smallest are measured in several feet.

¹¹⁷ The British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: R. & A. Taylor, 1848) 104.

whether the objects were never intended to share a display space. It would seem that the answer to this question is debatable, as the *Synopsis* and the report on the British Museum from the Royal Commission make it clear that the objects were in a temporary station, though more modern sources seem to make clear the idea that admiration from the viewing public was the sole impetus for a change in display.¹¹⁸ This change would occur in 1849, when a new room was opened which displayed the Assyrian artifacts on their own. Yet, as the following chapter will describe, the room itself was rather as inconsequential to the overall program of the Museum as the room of miscellany had been.

¹¹⁸ Please see footnote 91 for information concerning the Royal Commission.

Chapter V

Assyrian Display at the British Museum: 1849

By the end of the 1840s, the economic and political rise of the middling classes had left the British Museum's admission policy in a dynamic state; no longer was the Museum simply "a lounging place of the rich", but instead a place open to much of the general populace.¹¹⁹

Reflecting this, articles describing the Assyrian artifacts and their display at the British Museum were found more often published within news outlets that catered to a large and diverse public.

Publications such as *The Achill Missionary Herald* (Dublin), the *Athenaeum*, *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* (Edinburgh), *The Examiner*, *The Illustrated London News*, the *John Bull Magazine*, *The Lady's Newspaper*, the *Times* and *The Watchman* (London) all reported on the Assyrian specimens, and the perceived value which they possessed.¹²⁰ Highlighting the popular emergence of Layard's discoveries, a December, 1848 article in *The Morning Chronicle* notes that "the British Museum . . . was crowded from the opening until the close. The only addition to

¹¹⁹ Frederick Bohrer. "The Times and Spaces of History: Representation, Assyria and the British Museum". In, Daniel J. Sherman, Irit Rogoff, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 201. Yet, even as admission policies changed to allow entrance and tours to the general public, for the middling classes and the bourgeoisie, Museum admission was still not easily achieved and far from universal.

¹²⁰ These publications all catered to distinctly different audiences, either through geography (London, Dublin and Edinburgh), political association (the *Examiner* was a Whig weekly production), education levels (the *Athenaeum* was focused on literary and scholarly works, while the *Illustrated London News* featured smaller stories and more pictures), or simply through social class association (*Chamber's* was almost exclusively focused on production for the working class). Regarding the Assyrian artifacts specifically, the notices and judgments of these publications all differ slightly according to their own bias (*The Lady's Newspaper* notes that the most important objects are reliefs which show domestic scenes, while *The Achill Missionary Herald* states that the overall theme of Nineveh's wickedness and biblical destruction should be most pertinent to the viewer), though all urge the reader to visit the "remarkable monuments" of Assyria, then deposited at the British Museum.

the attractions since the last holidays are the Nimroud sculptures, which excited the admiration of the crowd.”¹²¹

In acknowledgement of this public demand, the British Museum opened its first dedicated display of Assyrian objects, called the Nimrud Room, in 1849. Established in the British Museum’s dungeonous basement, the Nimrud Room was poorly lit but offered a larger area for the display of Assyrian artifacts.¹²² From the Great Russell Street entrance, the Nimrud Room was placed further within the Museum, and was found by crossing the Greco-Roman rooms and venturing into the labyrinth of Antiquities Galleries [Figure 12]. Still, the basement space which contained the Nimrud Room was only accessible by descending a rickety and temporary wooden staircase placed in a hallway near the Phigaleian Room and the Egyptian Saloon. Confined to a dark, subterranean setting, the Assyrian objects were separated from the rest of the museum physically, and inhabited a space that must have sensually presented a viewing experience that expressed all the muddiness still surrounding Assyria and its artifacts. Even with a new dedicated display, the distance between Assyria and London was as far as ever, and the knowledge of the Assyrian artifacts possessed by the general public and those within the British Museum was equidistant.

In early 1849, the same year of the Nimrud Room, Austen Henry Layard’s first book was published, which served to somewhat illuminate the Assyrian artifacts and their Mesopotamian origin. Entitled *Nineveh and its Remains*, Layard’s work was an instant hit, selling 20,000 copies

¹²¹ “The Exhibitions,” *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Wednesday, December 27, 1848; Issue 23418. “The crowd” which *The Morning Chronicle* catered to was political in nature, but was situated within the middle classes. The paper sold for 7 shillings in 1834. The paper employed Charles Dickens as a political correspondent under the pen name of “Boz” in the mid 1830’s. Laurel Brake, Marysa Demoor. *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Waltham, MA: Academia Press, 2009), 427.

¹²² Frederick Bohrer. “The Times and Spaces of History: Representation, Assyria and the British Museum”. In, Daniel J. Sherman, Irit Rogoff, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 204.

between 1849 and 1851.¹²³ Attestation of public desire for Layard's writing can be found in an 1849 *Times* article, which calls *Nineveh and its Remains*, "the most extraordinary book of the present age" and goes on to state that, "we question whether a more enlightened or more entertaining traveler than Mr. Layard is to be met with in the annals of our modern English history."¹²⁴ In fact, when Henry Rawlinson returned to London from his post in Mesopotamia in 1850, he presented a speech at the Royal Asiatic Society, where he assumed "that every one present was acquainted with the valuable work of Mr. Layard" and as such did not describe works of Assyrian art at the British Museum.¹²⁵ Instead, Rawlinson merely referenced anecdotes found in *Nineveh and its Remains*, when speaking of and analyzing the Assyrian objects.¹²⁶ Bohrer and others have noted that this new public knowledge of Assyria forced the Trustees to exert more control over the display of Assyrian objects, though perhaps the "control" was enacted as a result of the massive influx of new visitors, which the British Museum received.¹²⁷ Whatever type of control the Museum exerted over the new display area, the 1849 construction of a dedicated space indicates a transition towards the making of a more complete Assyrian exhibition.

Apart from the fact that a dedicated Assyrian gallery then existed, completeness was achieved primarily through the inclusion of objects that had not been featured in the 1847

¹²³ Timothy Larsen. "Austen Henry Layard's Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain". *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 2009. 67.

¹²⁴ "Nineveh and its Remains," *The Times* (London, England) February 9, 1849; page 5; issue 20095. Another article that shows the public's desire is "Literature Section," *John Bull* [London, England] 19 March 1853: 187, which states, "great as was the interest excited...by the first publication of the discoveries made by Mr. Layard...owing to the large demand, the spirited publisher, issues at once, unabridged, and copiously illustrated in cheap form" a new publication possessing updates on "philological and historical knowledge".

¹²⁵ "Nineveh," *The Lady's Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday, January 26, 1850; pg. 46; issue 161. It is important to remember that Rawlinson did not favor the Assyrian artifacts. Please see footnote 99.

¹²⁶ "Nineveh," *The Lady's Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday, January 26, 1850; pg. 46; issue 161.

¹²⁷ This may in fact be what Bohrer indicates, stating, "an attendant was occupied full-time in escorting visitors to see them [Assyrian objects]" though the context in which this statement is included is somewhat confusing. Frederick Bohrer. *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 199.

display.¹²⁸ These objects were more narrative and provided viewers insight into the culture, religion and history of Assyria, but also treated the Assyrian world with familiar terms. One such object was a brick from Nimrud shown in the 1849 display and noted by the weekly, *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet, and General Advertiser*, as being inscribed with cuneiform writing, but also “with the footsteps of a weasel . . . the little animal and the mighty Assyrian king have stamped their existence on the same piece of clay.”¹²⁹ The mythical history of Assyria is mixed with the basic, comfortable, and even friendly terms of a popular animal reference.¹³⁰

The newly displayed artifacts presented interesting and intelligible visual history and subjective aesthetics to audiences that possessed only a general knowledge of art; as Inderpal Grewal has said, “for the casual visitor [referencing the working and middling class], the [British] museum...aimed at inculcating general ideas...it suggested above all, the accessibility of the treasure displayed within it.”¹³¹ An 1849 *Lady's Newspaper* article reinforces this, in that its language, centered on the description of a series of engravings, provides the reader with a basic blend of artistic analysis, historical origin and biblical allusion.¹³²

Two engravings that the *Lady's Newspaper* identifies as being included in the Nimrud Room are given titles (“Interior of a Castle” and “Triumphal Return of the King from Battle”)

¹²⁸ “Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum,” *The Lady's Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday, January 12, 1850; Issue 159. It seems that certain objects had been held in storage, and not displayed in the room of miscellany, due to an unavailability of space.

¹²⁹ “Gleanings,” *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet, and General Advertiser* (Truro, England), Friday, May 04, 1849; pg. 7; Issue 2393. This brick appears to have a crowd favorite, as it was reported in several other news outlets, such as, “Varieties”. *The Northern Star and National Trades' Journal* (Leeds, England), Saturday, May 26, 1849; Issue 605.

¹³⁰ An article entitled, “Holiday Visitors to The British Museum”, *The Morning Post* (London, England), from January 5th, 1849, issue 23426, states that over the Christmas Week, 37,260 patrons visited the British Museum, “a much larger number than usual”.

¹³¹ “Inderpal Grewal. “Constructing National Subjects: The British Museum and Its Guidebooks”. *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). ed. Lisa Bloom. 44.

¹³² “Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum,” *The Lady's Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday, December, 29, 1849; Issue 157.

and are accompanied by brief descriptions of their visual and subjective elements [Figure 13 and 14].¹³³ Similarly, a page found in an 1849, *Illustrated London News*, reproduces three objects included in the Nimrud Room (a “Specimen of Assyrian Writing”, “Assyrian Divinity” and “The King Crossing A River”) and provides explanation on their decorative and symbolic nature.¹³⁴ Interestingly, the *Illustrated London News* article includes reference numbers for the objects (the “Assyrian Divinity” is “Slab No.13”), which were likely given to aid reader’s intending to visit the objects in the British Museum.¹³⁵ These two articles, both from around the beginning of 1850, seem to mark a shift in pronouncements of the Assyrian objects featured in the British Museum.

Prior to these articles, the majority of press outlets (and the British Museum) attempted to domesticate the foreign objects by stationing them theoretically and physically within proximity of objects better known and approved of by the English public and Museum directors. This change was not quick, though it does seem to have been somewhat comprehensive, as in 1849, such long running and Classically inclined sources as *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* and the *Quarterly Review*, both remark on the intrinsic merit which the Assyrian objects possessed. *Chamber’s* notes that the objects displayed, “a knowledge of design, and even composition, indicating an advanced state to civilization”, while the *Quarterly Review*, expounds upon the architecture, ornamentation and decoration of Assyrian architecture.¹³⁶ The intellectually documented acceptance of Assyria and its art within the popular press of 1849 reflected the British Museum’s display, in that it positioned Assyrian culture within Britain’s own. Just as the

¹³³ “Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum,” *The Lady’s Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday, December, 29, 1849; Issue 157.

¹³⁴ “Specimen of Assyrian Writing”. *Illustrated London News* (London, England), March, 31, 1849.

¹³⁵ “Specimen of Assyrian Writing”. *Illustrated London News* (London, England), March, 31, 1849. A reference number is not given for the “Specimen of Assyrian Writing” or “The King Crossing The River”, though the latter object is noted as also being reproduced with additional information in *Illustrated London News* issue No. 348.

¹³⁶ *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*, 1849. *British Quarterly Review*, 1849. Both sources are reprinted in Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 151-155.

weasel had stamped the brick, Assyrian reproductions and analyses featured in outlets such as *The Lady's Newspaper*, *Chamber's* and the *Quarterly Review*, left their imprint on the British public.

Chapter VI

Assyrian Display at the British Museum: 1851

By 1851, the British Museum's attempt at a complete display of Assyrian objects was realized. Surfacing from their basement, the Assyria artifacts were gathered together to be displayed in what was called "The Assyrian Saloon" [Figure 15].¹³⁷ Comprised of three long, narrow gallery rooms, a transept and the Nimrud Room, the Assyrian Saloon was the first of the many Antiquities Galleries entered upon leaving the British Museum's main entrance hall.¹³⁸ Placed before and alongside the Classical and Egyptian galleries, the Assyrian Saloon was fit within the Museum's broad chronology of art and preferred modality of aesthetics. Evolving into this manner of display and valuation, it is clear that by 1851, the Assyrian artifacts had garnered some influence (or, at least a constituency of respect) amongst the general public and those within the British Museum. In fact, the creation of the Assyrian Saloon, like the Nimroud Room before it, can be quantified in part by the ever-rising prevalence of "Assyria" in social culture.

In the decade of 1840 to 1850, the number of visitors admitted to the British Museum under the billing of "general admission", rose annually by approximately 70,000 patrons.¹³⁹ When assessing the admission records for this decade, several interesting observations can be made. Firstly, that general admission totals in the years 1847, 1849 and 1850 are approximately 100,000 patrons higher than in the years that directly precede them; 1846, 1848 and 1849. Many factors likely contributed to this increase (such as the complete renovation of the British Museum

¹³⁷ British Museum, *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 95.

¹³⁸ This information has been compiled from Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 115; and *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum*, 1851 and 1852.

¹³⁹ Attendance record printed in Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 330. In 1850, admission to the British Museum, for the first time, exceeded 1,000,000 visitors, an increase of nearly 400,000 patrons over the previous high in 1840.

space as well as the changing admission policies), though it is curious to note that the years of excess (1847, 1849 and 1850) directly correspond to years when the British Museum's Assyrian exhibition changed; an 1851 article appearing in *Boswell's Life of Johnson* seems to reinforce this. Emphatically referencing a public affinity for visiting Assyrian objects in the British Museum, it states, "the subject is at once the most erudite and popular topic of the day; as the anxiety of our antiquaries, and the thousands at the British Museum on Easter Monday, alike testify", it was "the objects themselves...which were deemed relevant."¹⁴⁰ From this, it is clear that Assyria, in knowledge and in display, received its most abundant clarification in the years 1850 and 1851.¹⁴¹ By including Assyrian objects alongside the Classical standard, the Assyrian works were united with the British Museum's internal aesthetic preference, and became an integral part of the dialogue of artistic value and concern.

Pieced together from artifacts "procured . . . chiefly . . . during the years 1846 and 1847" the Assyrian Saloon compartmentalized the Assyrian acquisitions through a discriminate fashion of hypothesized interpretation and visual analysis.¹⁴² Upon entering the British Museum's Great Hall from Russell Street, one would encounter the colossal human headed winged-bull and lion, deposited alongside two large Assyrian bas-relief slabs. It is unclear where specifically the Assyrian sculptures were placed within the Great Hall, though one entered the Antiquities Galleries (the first of which was the Assyrian Saloon) by walking across the Hall and turning left

¹⁴⁰ "The Buried City of the East – Nineveh," *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 1851, Vol. 1. 198.

Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria*, 147. Writing later in 1857, Joseph Bonomi states, "The great Winged Bulls and Lions which now grace the halls of our British Museum, attract the notice of visitors, and by their size, their antiquity, and their strange story, induce those who might otherwise pass on to other objects, to stop and inquire for their companion antiques, which, once seen, can not be easily forgotten". Joseph Bonomi. *Nineveh and its Palaces*, 250.

¹⁴¹ From the Assyrian Saloon and its compartmentalization of Assyria, the commentary within the *Synopsis*, and the large increase of admitted patrons.

¹⁴² British Museum, *Synopsis*, (1851), 107...and thus the artifacts can be mostly attributed to the original archaeological undertakings conducted by Layard and Rawlinson. The 1851 *Synopsis* calls the rooms "compartments", 107-112.

down the long hallway, which had featured the “room of miscellany” in 1847 and 1848.

Traversing the hallway, visitors to the Museum would have found themselves within the Assyrian Saloon, where “in the first compartment on the left”, numerous sculptural slabs were presented that had been found primarily by Layard in the northwest edifice of the Nimrud mounds.¹⁴³

The *Synopsis* describes three relief sculptures in this first compartment: “a slab containing two figures standing, between whom is the sacred tree” [Figure 16], “a slab containing two figures of Nisroch (?); the right hand raised, holding a fir cone, the left holding a square vessel or basket, between them the sacred tree” [Figure 17] and a “slab on which is the same tree, between two kneeling figures” [Figure 18].¹⁴⁴ In identifying Nisroch, the *Synopsis* points to an Assyrian god of agriculture, which, with the inclusion of the “sacred tree”, would have been a reasonable assumption. However, in modernity, it is known that the figures depicted on these slabs represent supernatural spirits termed, *apkallu*, which were often utilized in palace, temple and domestic reliefs to “frighten away evil-wishing demons.”¹⁴⁵ The sacred tree, present on all three slabs, is more ambiguous, though it is a stylized motif, which appears often in the ancient Near Eastern world. The *apkallu* figures, and their associated symbols of Assyrian culture and religion are typical of the objects displayed in the eleven compartments of the Assyrian Saloon, which contained, sixty-seven sculptural objects and an undeterminable amount of “painted bricks” displayed around a doorframe.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ British Museum, *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

¹⁴⁴ British Museum, *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

¹⁴⁵ Stone panel from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal; II (Room I).

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/s/stone_panel_nw_palace-8.aspx

¹⁴⁶ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117-122.

The second compartment featured seven slab reliefs which depicted Assyrian battle scenes and sieges, warriors and their weapons; on an eighth slab, a “eunuch” is shown leading four prisoners, bound with their hands behind their back.¹⁴⁷ These eight war reliefs highlight the almost mythical brutality for which the mighty Assyrian armies were often identified. The first slab in the compartment shows an Assyrian king flanked by four warriors, “three in the act of discharging their arrows.”¹⁴⁸ Below the king lies a corpse splintered by the sailing arrows, while “on the plain in the distance, is another dead body devoured by an eagle.”¹⁴⁹ On a second, similar slab, the siege of a town is presented, while three figures stand impaled on poles in the distance.¹⁵⁰ The eight slabs in the war compartment appear to have been arranged by the British Museum to form a narrative of Assyrian conquest. Slab one (as the *Synopsis* designates it) portrays the king riding into battle on his chariot, slab three representing the seizure of a town, slabs six and seven “representing a city which has been taken” and slab eight showing an eunuch leading captured prisoners away.¹⁵¹ The *Synopsis* further notes that these relief slabs were all excavated by Layard in the “Centre of Mound”, which may correspond to the “Centre Palace” area specifically marked on excavation maps made by Layard, for the mounds of Nimrud.¹⁵²

The third compartment in the Assyrian Saloon contains reliefs depicting the hunting of lions and bulls. On slab five in this compartment, a king returns from a hunt surrounded by cheering warriors, musicians and a prostrate lion.¹⁵³ From the *Synopsis*, it is determinable that the

¹⁴⁷ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117. The eighth scene slab could be the slab the 1848 *Synopsis* referred to (an Assyrian monarch, accompanied by four guards, receiving a procession of four persons), and was therefore also included in the original room of miscellany display. See footnote 118.

¹⁴⁸ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

¹⁴⁹ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

¹⁵⁰ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

¹⁵¹ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

¹⁵² British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

¹⁵³ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 117.

third compartment was not arranged to represent a coherent narrative, as several additional battle scenes were included in this compartment and intersect the continual presentation of hunting scene slabs. The final relief in the compartment, slab eight, shows a king in the midst of a bull hunt, stabbing one bull between the horns with a long spear, while another bull lays slain beside him, “pierced by four arrows.”¹⁵⁴

In compartment four of the Assyrian Saloon, the *Synopsis* notes several interesting slabs. Slab one of this compartment seems to represent a tribute scene (the first found in the various compartments) where the king overlooks five captives who address him. Slabs three and four of the fourth compartment are subjectively intriguing, as the *Synopsis* notes “two men are dragging a boat, in which the king is standing in his chariot. In the boat are three men rowing and one steering, and beside it is a man swimming, supported on an inflatable skin; behind are three horses swimming.”¹⁵⁵ Apart from these slabs the *Synopsis* notes that slab eight, “formerly contained another subject”, and one therefore wonders if the slab was damaged, carved over or showed some remnants of coloring.¹⁵⁶

The remaining compartments (five through eleven) held slabs which portrayed scenes similar to those housed in compartments one through four: battle and siege scenes, depictions of tributary offerings, warrior’s with swords and bows, tutelary and *apkallu* figures. Within these remaining compartments, several artifacts should be noted. The *Synopsis* shows that the “black obelisk” (now called the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III) was included at the end of the fifth compartment. Giving a brief description, the *Synopsis* states that the obelisk is seven feet tall, contains two hundred and ten lines of cuneiform writing, shows animals, and has figures who

¹⁵⁴ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 119.

¹⁵⁵ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 119.

¹⁵⁶ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 120.

hold tributary gifts.¹⁵⁷ In the sixth compartment, is “a slab with a man who is driving before him flocks of sheep and goats.”¹⁵⁸ This animal-herder slab is the first in the compartment’s to represent an individual engaged in occupation, though in compartment eight, a smaller, quatrefoil cutout slab shows individuals engaging in domestic occupations.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, next to this domestic scene was displayed an equally small relief, providing an interior perspective of an stable where a man bends to groom a horse.¹⁶⁰ Portrayals of these two bas-reliefs were printed in separate issues of *The Lady’s Newspaper*, with the quatrefoil carving appearing in a December, 1849 edition, and the stable scene appearing the next month, in January, 1850 [Figure 18].¹⁶¹ In compartment eight, the *Synopsis* notes that a slab is shown which depicts “five camels preceded by a female”, the only overt reference to a woman found in the *Synopsis*’s description of the Assyrian Saloon. Spectators to the Saloon would have wandered amongst the reliefs noting that social and personal activities such as war, swimming, hunting and baking were as prevalent in the ancient world as they were in the modern.

Interplay between ancient object and modern observer constructed a framework which deposited within the Museum-goer the power to interact with ancient Assyria on a personal level. For those who enjoyed sporting, there were hunting scenes. For those engaged in domestic activities, there existed relief depictions of professional and private life. For military men, there were battle scenes, and for those occupied in more civil affairs, there existed slabs portraying musicians, readers and writers. The power of the Assyrian Saloon was that for the English

¹⁵⁷ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 120.

¹⁵⁸ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 120.

¹⁵⁹ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 120.

¹⁶⁰ British Museum. *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London: G. Woodfall, 1851), 120.

¹⁶¹ “The Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum”. *The Lady’s Newspaper* (London: England), December 29, 1849, pg. 360; Issue 157. “Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum (Second Notice)”. *The Lady’s Newspaper* (London: England), January 12, 1850, pg. 18; Issue 159.

viewer, Assyria was finally present, artistically, historically and independently. No longer were the artifacts strictly confined to comparative standards or an unpleasant viewing experience; Assyria and its art were finally presented in a location designed for aesthetic viewing and epistemological expression.

Part III

Introduction

Assyrian Display at the Sydenham Crystal Palace

In 1854, a new type of Assyrian display was constructed at the Sydenham Crystal Palace, called the “Nineveh Court” [Figure 19].¹⁶² As a new agency of artistic, architectural and technological production, the Nineveh Court allowed the general public to interact with Assyria in ways which had not been previously possible at the British Museum. The Nineveh Court was simulative, and visually modeled an Assyrian palace [Figure 20] understood sensually by its spectators. The Nineveh Court used symbol-based communication and was expressive in its structure. That is, the Nineveh Court was understandable to its viewers because its presented symbols which, for many, were identifiable markers of “Assyria”.

Discussion of the Sydenham Nineveh Court shifts these paradigms of display from occurring within the very private confines of the British Museum, to the public arena of the Crystal Palace. Moreover, the transition of Assyrian display from the British Museum to the Crystal Palace represents a shift in ideological perception. No longer was Assyrian display challenged by the space, accessibility and representation of the British Museum and its governors. At Sydenham, Assyria was presented as real and explorable, and was experienced by its largest public yet. Reporting on the opening of the Sydenham Crystal Palace, an 1854 article found in the London, *Standard*, notes:

¹⁶² Also sometimes called the Assyrian Court, this study will use the label, “Nineveh Court” as it is what is found in Layard’s guidebook to the Court, “Handbook to the Nineveh Court”.

. . . from the enthusiasm that was this day displayed by the very thousands who thronged this almost fairly-like scene, there appeared to be no room left for doubt that the Crystal Palace of 1854, placed as it has been on a permanent and enduring basis, will for years to come be the school of art, the temple of science and a moral and intellectual instructor of the people.¹⁶³

However, the Nineveh Court, in construction, program and aesthetics, presented a manipulated reality, which saw its fiction produce a simulated setting meant more for pleasure and experience than for the intellectual instruction that *The Standard* indicates.

In 1854, Austen Henry Layard, under the supervision of architect Owen Jones (1809-1874) and the Crystal Palace Company, designed the Nineveh Court to be one of the “Fine Art Courts” within the Sydenham Crystal Palace. The second rendition of the Crystal Palace saw its crowning feature become Jones’ Courts, which were the “the most ambitious and original feature of the new Palace at Sydenham” and offered visitors an attempt to tangibly interact with models of distant nations and civilizations.¹⁶⁴ The Courts were designed to be “meticulous reconstructions,” and aimed to instruct and educate their viewers on the creative nature and architectural traditions of the societies, which they reflected.¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, Court construction was orchestrated to be as authentic as possible, and was often supervised closely by Grand Tourists, antiquarians and archaeologists who had achieved some manner of experience with a particular culture that a Court displayed.¹⁶⁶ In the case of the Nineveh Court, designed to reflect

¹⁶³ “Opening of the Crystal Palace — This Day”. *The Standard* (London, England), Saturday, June 10, 1854; Issue 9311.

¹⁶⁴ Jan Piggott. *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 67.

¹⁶⁵ Ann Helmreich has said, “the primary aim of the Fine Arts Courts [which the Assyrian Court was included in] was educational”. Anne Helmreich. “On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854.” From *The Branch Collective*. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-helmreich-on-the-opening-of-the-crystal-palace-at-sydenham-1854, 2

¹⁶⁶ Piggott notes that “Digby Wyatt sketched out the plan for his Pompeian House at the site of the actual excavation” while its decoration was completed “by Giuseppe Abbate. . . who had. . . spent twenty four years

the temporal discoveries made along the banks of the Tigris River, Layard exerted primary influence on the physical construction of the Court, in addition to also personally writing the Court's guidebook.¹⁶⁷ Included in the Nineveh Court were many sculptural objects, reliefs and cuneiform reproductions, which had been made directly from plaster casts of objects then residing at the British Museum.¹⁶⁸

Assyrian object display at Sydenham "opened up a broader range of exhibitory possibilities" for its culture and art, and provided the largest opportunity yet for public scrutiny and consumption. The second Crystal Palace supplied the possibility that Assyrian art could be viewed outside of a strictly institutional setting, accommodating the intellectual critic, the celebrated patron and the middle class visitor alike. In fact, it was said that "the Nineveh Court, from recent discoveries and publications, is sure to excite considerable attention alike amongst the learned and the unlearned; for whilst the former may ruminate the curious mutation to which the world has been subject, the latter cannot fail to be struck by the immense lions. . ."¹⁶⁹

At Sydenham, however, spectators would have viewed the concept of "Assyria" as a pastiche: the geographically and thematically sectioned displays of Assyrian art which had occurred in the British Museum, and specifically with the Assyrian Saloon, were not present at the Nineveh Court. The palatial model was a composite of cultural symbols inferred and discovered from different locations such as Nimrud, the Kuyunjik, Khorsabad and even Susa, though all were simply referred by the blanket term, "Assyria". In this then, an important

recording ancient Pompeii". Jan Piggott. *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 64.

¹⁶⁷ See, Austen Henry Layard. *Handbook to the Nineveh Court* (Bradbury & Evans, 1854)

¹⁶⁸ Austen Henry Layard. *Handbook to the Nineveh Court* (Bradbury & Evans, 1854), 55. Reproductions were also made from objects in the Louvre.

¹⁶⁹ "The Crystal Palace at Sydenham". *The Morning Post* (London, England), Thursday, February 09, 1854; pg. 6; Issue 25004.

question arises: how *was* the Nineveh Court received by its public? Was it recognized through its “aesthetic interconnectedness” with other previous representations of Assyria, or was it viewed as completely inauthentic, and therefore more as a novelty or commodity?¹⁷⁰ To answer these questions, the next chapters will provide formal visual analyses of the Nineveh Court.

¹⁷⁰ Suzi Gablik. *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991) 22. Gablik uses the term “aesthetic interconnectedness”.

Chapter VII

The Nineveh Court

Stationed on the northwest side of the Sydenham Crystal Palace and constructed near Owen Jones' Fine Art Courts, the Nineveh Court was a pieced-together amalgam of original sculptures, plaster casts, polychrome decoration and terraced architecture, which was intended to visually express the "magnificence and luxury" of an Assyrian palace.¹⁷¹ The court itself was 120 feet long x 50 feet wide and 40 feet high, or about one-fifth larger than the all the others.¹⁷² The Nineveh Court, it was said, would be "visited with intense interest, unfolding as it does its wondrous record of remote ages, in colossal monuments, sculptured walls, gigantic idols, and statues of renowned and mighty monarchs . . . Its solemn and mysterious chambers, its sacred halls and colossal forms, appear to usher us into converse with the mighty dead."¹⁷³ Visitors to Sydenham likely found Nineveh to be "the strangest" Court, as the palace-like structure was divided into upper and lower portions, which were separated by a faux-stone wall.¹⁷⁴

On the exterior, the lower portion of the palace was adorned with seventeen foot tall cast-replicas of the famous human headed winged-bull and lion ("modeled from accurate drawings"), which were "meant to represent the palace of Khorsabad" as well as artifacts found at the

¹⁷¹ Austen Henry Layard. *The Nineveh Court in the Crystal Palace: Volume 6 of Crystal palace company, Sydenham, guides and handbooks* (London: Crystal Palace Library and Bradbury & Evans, 1854) v-vi. The casts were taken of Assyrian artworks then on display in the Louvre and the British Museum. Jan Piggott. *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 111-112.

¹⁷² Jan Piggott. *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 109.

¹⁷³ John Tallis. *History and Description of the Crystal Palace: And the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 104.

¹⁷⁴ Jan Piggott. *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 109.

Kouyunjik.¹⁷⁵ The upper portion, stylized with an arcade and fluted columns whose capitals displayed cartoonish depictions of horned and collared bulls, was “modeled on Persepolis.”¹⁷⁶ Above these columns, short battlements were constructed, which Layard notes, “are a peculiar feature in Assyrian architecture.”¹⁷⁷ The cornice of the battlements show painted ornaments of honeysuckle and tulips, which, though they are said to be “of Assyrian origin”, appear similar to numerous drawings from Jones’ celebrated work, *The Grammar of Ornament* [Figure 21].¹⁷⁸ As one of the preeminent art theorists of the nineteenth century, Jones sought to find a “modern” style which rejected both the historicist and Classical preferences.¹⁷⁹ In the polychrome, floriated patterning of the Nineveh Court ornamentation, this new style was clearly seen. To the viewer of the Nineveh Court, this must have presented an interesting spectacle. An article from *The Standard*, shows:

The Nineveh Court is one of the most striking productions of art, which must be seen for any idea to be formed . . . the roof and interior are profusely ornamented with frieze and characteristic designs, in the richest colouring.¹⁸⁰

On the interior, the juxtaposition continued, with the entrance to the “Central Hall” being guarded by “a pair of human-headed bulls, seventeen feet high, modeled from those discovered

¹⁷⁵ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52. John Tallis. *History and Description of the Crystal Palace: And the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 104.

¹⁷⁶ Jan Piggott. *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 109.

¹⁷⁷ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52.

¹⁷⁸ The entablature area shows a mix of Assyrian ornamentation (Plates 12-14), Pompeian ornamentation (Plates 23-25), Arabian ornamentation (Plates 31-35) and Celtic Ornamentation (Plates 63-65). Owen Jones. *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Quaritch, 1910) Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52.

¹⁷⁹ Doug Clouse. Angela Voulangas. *The handy book of artistic printing: a collection of letterpress examples, with specimens of type, ornament, corner fills, borders, twisters, wrinklers, and other freaks of fancy* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009) 179.

¹⁸⁰ “Opening of the Crystal Palace — This Day”. *The Standard* (London, England), Saturday, June 10, 1854; Issue 9311.

in the ruins of Nimroud.”¹⁸¹ The Central Hall contained several smaller chambers, one of which, also modeled after a room uncovered at Nimrod, was scattered with bas-reliefs “placed . . . nearly . . . in the order in which they were originally found”, though the dimensions of the room more accurately reflected chambers discovered at Nineveh.¹⁸² All of these sculptures were reproductions cast from objects displayed in the Assyrian Saloon at the British Museum.¹⁸³ A period observer stated that the walls of this chamber, “in their illustration, recall to our minds the accuracy of the description given by Ezekiel of the decorations of an Assyrian palace.”¹⁸⁴ Several of these wall illustrations are mentioned in Layard’s guidebook, which relates to a depiction of an Assyrian king. Layard wrote:

To the left on entering, is a group (No. 1, on the plan) representing the king resting his right hand on a long wand or staff, and standing between two winged figures. The Assyrian king may be recognized by his head-dress, which consisted of a peculiar conical cap or turban, apparently made up of bands of some coloured material, surmounted by a small cone. . . The royal robes are remarkable for the richness and variety of the designs probably embroidered upon them, mostly of a sacred character, and the arms for the elegance of their ornaments. The king, as well as his principle nobles and attendants, wore ear-rings, bracelets, armlets, necklaces, and the splendour of his arrive, as represented in sculptures - the long embroidered robes, the ornaments of fold and precious stones, the elaborately curled hair and the tassels and ribands attached to various parts of his dress. . . preserved to us by the Greek historians of the luxury and effeminacy of the Assyrian monarchs. It is doubtful whether the hair and beard so artistically dressed and curled were false.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52. “Two other smaller interior chambers, which created passageways that funneled visitors back into the central hall, “form no part of an Assyrian building” and had “merely been taken from the thickness of the wall, in order that no space might be unnecessarily lost” (Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52). Piggott has said that Layard’s reconstruction, with its painted facade, proximity to the exotic palms of the Tropical Department, and its larger than life appearance (the five entrance archways were seventeen feet tall) reinforced an Eastern world mythologized and intersected by preferences of Western aesthetics and display (Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 111-112).

¹⁸² Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52.

¹⁸³ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52.

¹⁸⁴ John Tallis, *History and Description of the Crystal Palace: And the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 104.

¹⁸⁵ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 59.

Upon leaving this chamber, another could be entered, designed to house original works of Assyrian art, which at the time of the Crystal Palace's opening, "were still on their way from Nineveh."¹⁸⁶ Past this chamber was a transept, which, similar to the second interior chamber, was decorated with replica sculptures and bas-reliefs showing a type of tree, with which two *apkallu* interact. This scene was conjectured by Layard to represent "the 'grove' or 'groves' so frequently mentioned in the Bible."¹⁸⁷

Owen Jones' polychrome decoration was "profusely employed" on the interior and exterior of both levels of the Assyrian palace, a feature which Layard relates "would have been absurd to omit."¹⁸⁸ Stephanie Moser has said that this coloring, which was found throughout the Sydenham Palace, "offered an overwhelmingly visual rather than scholarly experience for visitors."¹⁸⁹ Moser's modern review of the Nineveh Court lies somewhere in between two primary reviews, which remarked on the visual and scholarly experience of the Nineveh Court. A review by William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919) seems to agree with Moser, as Rossetti notes the Nineveh Court was, "aggressive" and a "nightmare", possessing colors which was "ghastly"

¹⁸⁶ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 61.

¹⁸⁷ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 62. It is important to note that scholars have determined that many of the "groves" in the Bible were not forests or groups of trees, but were instead possibly collections of Asherah Poles, which were pagan icons sometimes associated with fertility, phallic symbols or the goddess Asherah. For such an example of "groves" in the Bible, see 2 Kings 17:10. Other examples can also be found in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Micah.

¹⁸⁸ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52. The employment of polychromatism at the Nineveh Court clearly points to the artistic theories of Owen Jones, who worked in Greece with Jules Goury, who studied the use of polychrome by the ancient Greeks. Jones's use of polychrome would have placed him at odds with John Ruskin, who from 1851 to 1853 had published his architectural treatises *The Stones of Venice*, and in 1854, published twelve *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*. Ruskin favored historicism, and therefore the revival of authentic historic styles, which would have made the amalgamation that was the Assyrian Court, unfavorable to him, based on a desired standard of history. More than all of this though, it is also important to note that neither Layard, nor anyone else, truly knew what colors were employed in the construction and decoration of an Assyrian palace. The only knowledge of coloring that Layard would have accurately possessed would have been from small instances of color found on inscribed and incised bricks.

¹⁸⁹ Stephanie Moser. *Designing Antiquity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012) 141.

and demonstrated an “essence of Assyrian art” which was “despotic and barbaric . . .”¹⁹⁰ Layard, conversely, attempted to give his coloring a scholarly appeal, stating:

The arrangement and contrasts of the colours have been carefully studied, and when there has been no authority for their use in any particular instance, a comparison with other monuments and especially with Egyptian remains, have in some instances, furnished the means of deciding which to adopt.¹⁹¹

Anne Helmreich has stated that “the primary aim of the Fine Arts Court was education”, a notion which Layard seems to have adopted.¹⁹² This sentiment, as he states on the first page of his Nineveh Court guidebook, that “it has been the endeavor. . . to convey to the spectator as exact an idea as possible of Assyrian architecture.”¹⁹³ As a three-dimensional structure, the Nineveh Court accomplished Layard’s wishes by allowing patrons to experience a life-size reproduction of Assyria and its art, even as the highly modern setting of the Crystal Palace, and

¹⁹⁰ Jan Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 111-112. Truthfully, W.M. Rossetti’s opinion aligns more historically with the often violent nature of the ancient Assyrian culture, which was reflected in their need of fortified and heavy architecture. Comparatively, other Courts, like the Egyptian (designed by Jones, and also incorporating architecture from many different places) was said by the *Art Journal* to be colored with “extreme beauty” (Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 86). W.M. Rossetti was not alone in his appraisal, as the combination of Nineveh, Nimroud and Persepolis was remarked poorly upon by educated critics and the press. Elizabeth Eastlake, in her review of the Crystal Palace, notes the difficult nature of aesthetic composition in the Assyrian Court, as well. Eastlake states that as it is “colored, old Nineveh is absolutely ferocious - there is something in this untamable gaudiness which suggests the idea of a wild beast. . . One shudders to think of the generations that groaned underneath the yoke of these sanguinary reds, implacable blacks, and cruel blues - each to the appalled imagination a type of some blood-thirsty monster who tortured his victims as they do us”. Elizabeth Eastlake. *Quarterly Review*, 1855, issue 96, pg. 315. Reprinted in Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle*, 148.

¹⁹¹ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 53.

¹⁹² Helmreich shows that “a unitary historical narrative was possible, that the most effective way to convey this narrative was visually, and that reproductions were as valid as originals in demonstrating this history”. Academically (and therefore, institutionally) this was a commonly accepted idea for most of the 19th century, as it is well known that academies regularly used reproductions to instruct students. Helmreich says, “European art academies had long used copies of Greek and Roman statues to teach the principles of good design”. “On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854”

Ann Helmreich. “On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854” From *The Branch Collective*. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-helmreich-on-the-opening-of-the-crystal-palace-at-sydenham-1854 (page 3). Anne Helmreich. “On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854” From *The Branch Collective*. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-helmreich-on-the-opening-of-the-crystal-palace-at-sydenham-1854 (page 3).

¹⁹³ Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 52. This in turn, reflects another main goal of the Crystal Palace. Referencing ideas established in the *The Sydenham Crystal Palace Expositor* 3,

the partial realities in program, decoration and coloring distanced spectators from true Assyrian culture.¹⁹⁴

Layard's guidebook follows this blend of truth and fiction in that it expounds deeply upon Assyrian history and art, although it presents the Nineveh Court to the reader as a type of spectacular novelty. For example, Layard describes his famous winged-bull and lion discoveries, three times, as "monsters", a description which appears minimally elsewhere, and only in critical appraisals and rhetorical statements.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, the architecture of the upper portion of the palace facade was formulated from "no material evidence" and was highlighted by "exoticist communication" developed through discourse between the Orientalist James Fergusson, and Layard.¹⁹⁶ To Jones, Layard, Ferguson and likely to the Crystal Palace Company, these inferences were likely no matter, as it was believed that "the Fine Arts Courts addressed 'themselves directly to the eye' and, once visual attention was secured, would lead to 'study and

¹⁹⁴ Simply illustrating this notion is an 1854 article from *The North Wales Chronicle*, which calls the art and architecture of the Assyrian Court, "fac-similes", all the while giving a complete visual analysis, and stating that the reproductions are given in "great truth". "The crystal palace and park" *North Wales Chronicle* (Bangor, Wales), Saturday, June 17, 1854.

¹⁹⁵ Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 11, 26, 40. On this matter, Deborah Thomas states, "Clearly, in writing the handbook for the Nineveh Court, Layard recognized the need to describe the great hybrid sculptures for average British viewers who might be intrigued by these astonishing figures yet desire an officially approved label to hold them at some remove". Deborah Thomas. "Assyrian Monsters and Domestic Chimeras" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 48, No. 4, *The Nineteenth Century* (Autumn, 2008), pp. 897-90. As another example, Layard recounts the tale of how platforms were built for these human-headed "monsters", and then how the colossal statues were raised onto them. Layard states: "captives from foreign lands, others bound together in chains, and probably public malefactors, are seen with stones or with baskets filled with earth or bricks on their backs, hastening to the accumulating mounds. Groups of men are portrayed crouching on the ground and kneading the clay to make the bricks. . . .To transport the winged bulls. . .men drag them by main force up the inclined plane". Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 40.

¹⁹⁶ Malley, *Archaeology to Spectacle*, 150. Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 210-212. Accordingly, the Assyrian Court was literally presented to the public as a product of interpretation, particularly by Owen Jones, and James Ferguson, who was an architectural historian and self-taught Orientalist. For their inferences, see Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle*, 148. A good biography of Ferguson can be found in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, under the entry, "James Ferguson", hosted online at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/encyclopaediabrit10chisrich#page/273/mode/1up>

reflection'; that is, appreciation and comprehension."¹⁹⁷ Visual interpretation, and not necessarily a strict adherence to representational truthfulness, was a central concern of the Nineveh Court.¹⁹⁸ Helmreich notes that, for visitors, "visuality" served to provide both a sense of "rational recreation" and a conveyance of perceived knowledge.¹⁹⁹ The Nineveh Court functioned as a manifestation of the day's social and historical determinants, combining artistic forms with perceived Assyrian archetypes.

¹⁹⁷ Helmreich, "On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854," From *The Branch Collective*. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-helmreich-on-the-opening-of-the-crystal-palace-at-sydenham-1854 (pages 5-6). Quoting the *The Sydenham Crystal Palace Expositor* 6, 16.

¹⁹⁸ Helmreich, "On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854," From *The Branch Collective*. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-helmreich-on-the-opening-of-the-crystal-palace-at-sydenham-1854 (page 1).

¹⁹⁹ Helmreich, "On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854," From *The Branch Collective*. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-helmreich-on-the-opening-of-the-crystal-palace-at-sydenham-1854 (page 1).

Chapter VIII

Simulating Assyria

The Nineveh Court at the Sydenham Crystal Palace was constructed as a blend of geographic locations, ancient and modern ornamentation and real and copied art objects. For press outlets such as *The Builder*, who complained about the “unhistorical combination” of the Court, this presented a problem.²⁰⁰ Though, for many patrons, the Nineveh Court presented an explorable Eastern experience, complete with palm trees and exotic foliage [Figure 22]. It also, according to an 1854 report in the *Art Journal*, provided insightful illustration to biblical and historic records.²⁰¹ From accounts such as these, it is difficult to establish a normative response to the Nineveh Court. However, what the myriad of published opinions do insinuate is that the Nineveh Court functioned pragmatically for its spectators in various visual, educational, truthful and imaginary ways. To the modern observer, this kind of function references a visual “simulation” — a referential model that conveyed contrived meanings to its viewers.²⁰²

Simulation at the Nineveh Court allowed the public to see a colored and modeled Assyrian Palace (done with Owen Jones’s new aesthetic theory), affirmation of a relationship between the newly discovered Assyrian artifacts and the Bible, and most importantly, a manifestation of English dominance of the East. To address these simulations, this chapter will trace the changes in Western European presentations of Assyrian visual culture in the nineteenth century. Even if the Nineveh Court did not present a completely truthful reality of Assyria, enough of a visual idea of Assyria had already been established for Court viewers to cognitively

²⁰⁰ Jan Piggott, *Palace of the People* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 110.

²⁰¹ Jan Piggott, *Palace of the People* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 111.

²⁰² For further information, please see, Jean Baudrillard. *Simulation and Simulacra* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

receive and interpret the palatial structure and aesthetic adornment as “Assyria”.²⁰³ Long before Layard’s discoveries, popular simulations of Assyria could be found in England, which suggested how Assyria should appear; two such early examples are Lord Byron’s 1821 drama, *Sardanapalus*, and John Martin’s 1828-1829 painting, *The Fall of Nineveh* [Figure 23]. In fact, one may call these examples “proto-simulations”, as they reflected a reality, which was derived almost completely from historical works and inference, not fact.²⁰⁴

The proto-simulation found in *Sardanapalus* is particularly important for the establishment of an Assyrian visual culture in that Byron (1788-1824), as “the most popular writer of his day”, made cultural knowledge of Assyria (even as it was constructed) all but certain.²⁰⁵ Written twenty-five years before Layard would uncover Nineveh, *Sardanapalus* constructs an Eastern world through the illusory combination of references to contemporary British life and ancient heterogeneous sources.²⁰⁶ Moreover, it has been noted that Byron’s own life, friends and travels impacted the construction of many characters included in *Sardanapalus*, which led to the work’s “failure as an historical tragedy.”²⁰⁷ It is difficult to believe, however, that *Sardanapalus* did not function as a “historical” work for its readers, as its stories are given squarely within the historical setting and period. But it is quite easy to understand that Byron’s

²⁰³ This can be related to Petrilli and Ponzio’s different types of semiotic communication. “In *semiosis of communication*, signs are emitted for the receiver who must trace the meaning that the emitter intended”. Susan Petrilli. Augusto Ponzio. *Semiotics Unbound: Interpretive Routs through the Open Network of Signs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 344.

²⁰⁴ Byron likely based a large portion of the historical setting of *Sardanapalus* on Diodorus’s, *Bibliotheca Historica*, which recounts the history of the ancient East. Byron is quoted as saying, “. . .from Diodorus Siculus, (I know the history of Sardanapalus, and have known it since I was twelve years old), and read over a passage in the ninth vol. octavo of Mitford’s Greece, where he rather vindicated the memory of this last of the Assyrians”. Leslie Alexis Marchand. *Born for Opposition. Byron's Letters and Journals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 26. Furthermore, Byron sourced scenes from *Sardanapalus* from the works of Juvenal (Marchand, 128).

²⁰⁵ Daniela Garofalo, *Manly Leaders in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (New York: SUNY Press, 2009) 53.

²⁰⁶ Bohrer notes that these contemporary events would have been easily perceived by the temporal reader. Bohrer, *Inventing Assyria*, 339.

²⁰⁷ Leslie Marchand, *Byron's Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (London: John Murray, 1965) 105.

work while fantastical, was rigidly connected to contemporary events and traditions.²⁰⁸ In this, it is possible to see how *Sardanapalus* paved the way for the development of an Assyrian visual culture, which existed in the liminal space between Assyria distant and England present.

Painted nearly a decade after the completion of *Sardanapalus*, John Martin's *Fall of Nineveh* portrays the biblically prophesied destruction of Assyria. Martin (1789-1854) was a well-honored artist during his life, receiving (multiple times) the British Institution's medal and financial reward for artistic prominence.²⁰⁹ In his day, Martin appears to have been as popular as Byron, with his 1854 obituary in the *Illustrated Magazine of Art* noting that his work, ". . .carried his reputation into all quarters, over the whole of continental Europe as well as this island."²¹⁰ Also comparable to Byron was the crafting of Martin's "tremendously popular", *Fall of Nineveh*, which was, "choked with a variety of heterogeneous texts . . . much of the biblical Book of Nahum" and "contemporary reference works."²¹¹

Incorporating religious and historical motifs, the painting is dominated by a large temple complex which spreads from the foreground to the background, its many austere columns lined up and receding in a manner which mirrors the lines of Ninevite citizens and soldiers who cower in fear of the destruction which rains down upon them. One such citizen is King Sardanapalus, situated in the middle of the painting and gesturing towards the lit pyre, which will soon consume him. A period guide to the work notes that the temple in *Fall of Nineveh*, which encompasses the majority of the right side of the painting, was constructed through a

²⁰⁸ Richard Lansdown, "Fantasy Elements in Byron's 'Sardanapalus'." *Keats-Shelley Journal*, Vol. 40 (1991), p. 55-57.

²⁰⁹ "John Martin." *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, Vol. 3, No. 17 (1854), pp. 343-344. The British Institution (also called the British Gallery and the Pall Mall Picture Gallery) was a nobility and aristocracy run picture gallery with close ties to the National Gallery.

²¹⁰ "John Martin," *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, Vol. 3, No. 17 (1854), pp. 343-344.

²¹¹ Frederick N. Bohrer, "Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth Century France". *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Jun., 1998) 337.

combination of architectural motifs derived from comparative inference.²¹² Noting the temple architecture as “invented as the most appropriate for a city situate [sic] betwixt the two countries [Egypt and India] and necessarily in frequent intercourse with them,” the reference guide demonstrates that Martin’s proto-simulation, like Byron’s, constructs a highly hypothesized Assyrian setting.²¹³ Intriguingly, Martin’s architecturally discordant temple complex resembles Layard’s Nineveh Court, incorporating architectural motifs from the monumental architecture of different palace complexes as well as inferred coloring and decorative elements from other civilizations. In the Nineveh Court guidebook, Layard reiterates the incorporation of multiple architectural orders and coloring, stating:

The arrangement and contrasts of the colours have been carefully studied, and when there has been no authority for their use in any particular instance, a comparison with other monuments and especially with Egyptian, remains, have in some instances, furnished the means of deciding which to adopt.²¹⁴

Byron and Martin’s proto-simulations, introduced to the English public long before Layard’s discoveries and the British Museum’s exhibitions, set the scene for other, later simulations. From Byron and Martin, inanimate objects and intangible settings acted as semiotic sign emitters, which first visually constructed Assyria for the British public.²¹⁵ Finding a simulation, which directly succeeds *Sardanapalus* and *Fall of Nineveh* in England is somewhat difficult, though in France, Eugene Delacroix’s, *Mort de Sardanapale* [Figure 24] came after the English simulations in 1827. Offering yet another twist on the story of Sardanapalus, Delacroix

²¹² Frederick N. Bohrer, “Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth Century France”. *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Jun., 1998) 337.

²¹³ Frederick N. Bohrer, “Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth Century France”. *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Jun., 1998) 337.

²¹⁴ Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 53.

²¹⁵ Petrilli and Ponzio, “an inanimate environment acts as a quasi-emitter without a semiotic function”. *Semiotics Unbound: Interpretive Routs through the Open Network of Signs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 344.

(1798-1863) creates a scenario where the king dies alone, surrounded by his lover Myrrha, and many other figures, in idealized opulence.²¹⁶ Being painted in France and initially received poorly by the Academy, it is difficult to determine how precisely (or, if) *Mort de Sardanapale* was semiotically viewed by those in England.²¹⁷ And, as Delacroix “does not follow Byron”, understanding the impact that early simulations of Assyria had on the monumental work is complex.²¹⁸ However, as the fatal smoke which consumes Sardanapalus clears in the upper right corner of *Mort de Sardanapale*, an exterior view of the king’s palace can be seen, standing resolute against its consuming flames and appearing similar to the palace in John Martin’s *Fall of Nineveh*. In fact, features such as entablature and capital decoration, multitiered construction and bulbous column shape found in both *Fall of Nineveh* and *Mort de Sardanapale*, are so similar that they could be copies. Whether Delacroix looked to Martin’s work in inspiration or observation is unknown, though it is apparent that by the time of *Mort de Sardanapale*, it was understood that Assyria, its art and architecture, was supposed to follow a certain visual order.

In 1849, the London printing house, John Murray, published Austen Henry Layard’s first work, an account of his travels and excavations in the Eastern world. Called, *Nineveh and its Remains*, the book, as Timothy Larsen notes, was a “Victorian sensation”, and roused the interest of the English public as little before it had.²¹⁹ To Layard, the scope of the project seems to have been somewhat smaller, however. In the introduction to *Nineveh and its Remains*, Layard speaks to this:

²¹⁶ Peter Bloom . “Berlioz and the “Prix de Rome” of 1830,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Summer, 1981), pp. 284.

²¹⁷ Peter Bloom notes, *Mort de Sardanapale* “was, in fact, the first major salon painting by Delacroix not purchased by the State”. Peter Bloom . “Berlioz and the “Prix de Rome” of 1830,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 34, No. 2 (Summer, 1981), pp. 285.

²¹⁸ Peter Bloom . “Berlioz and the “Prix de Rome” of 1830,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 34, No. 2 (Summer, 1981), pp. 284.

²¹⁹ Timothy Larsen. “Austen Henry Layard’s Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain,” *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 2009, 66.

It is with considerable diffidence that I venture to submit the following narrative. The opinions of friends, and a desire on my part to communicate the little information that opportunities may have enabled me to acquire, with regard to a country and city so little known as Assyria and Nineveh, have long induced me to undertake a work of this nature under the united disadvantage of incapacity, literary inexperience, ill health, and a very short residence in England.²²⁰

Yet, for the public, *Nineveh and its Remains*, was of great importance, and functioned as a simulation of what Assyria, and indeed the Eastern world, was perceived to be. In simulation theory, as most prominently brought to light by Jean Baudrillard, this type of simulation would be called a “first step stimulation”, as it was produced to be a reflection of reality, and not necessarily intended to denature (or, “dissimulate” as Baudrillard says) the basic features of Assyria.²²¹ However truthful Layard’s work actually was, the general public and popular press endorsed the book all the same.

“The reasons *Nineveh and Its Remains* captured the public imagination were manifold . . . but not least among them was the way that it was seen . . . to provide fresh material to illuminate parts of the Bible, and perhaps even to confirm the veracity of Scripture.”²²² Layard, perhaps, instigated this in quoting scripture on the opening page of *Nineveh and its Remains*, and in writing to his mother in 1846, reveals that, “various passages in the 23 Chap [Ezekiel]: (14 & 15) are exact descriptions of the bas reliefs of Nimroud.”²²³ This is an important facet of the simulation which *Nineveh and its Remains* presented, and is further reflected in the press, as the evangelical, *British Quarterly Review* wrote in 1849, “. . . the language of the prophet ‘illustrates

²²⁰ Austen Henry Layard. *Nineveh and its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849) 7.

²²¹ Jean Baudrillard. *Simulation and Simulacra* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 6.

²²² Timothy Larsen. “Austen Henry Layard’s Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain”. *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 2009, 68.

²²³ Timothy Larsen. “Austen Henry Layard’s Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain”. *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 2009, 68.

the base-reliefs of Nimroud'. What better proof of the trustworthiness of a writer can be desired or found?"²²⁴

Yet, even as the *British Quarterly Review* notes the truthfulness of Layard's discoveries in a biblical and social sense, an 1849 review of *Nineveh and its Remains* describes the land which Layard excavated as being hidden by a "mantle of obscurity . . . shrouded from the gaze of even the Father of History [Herodotus]".²²⁵ The review continues, describing Assyria as a place of "scorched and barren desert", filled with "wandering Arabs" and "children of the desert", and notes that Layard had to "confide in his own courage and dexterity, and often in the speed of his own horse, as the only means of escaping robbery and murder."²²⁶ Another issue of *The British Quarterly Review* writes that its readers, "are content to follow him [Layard] into the villages of the Mohammedans, Nestorian Christians, devil-worshippers, as if these were the sole or primary object of his travels".²²⁷ From quotes such as these, it can be seen that the press may have sensationalized some of Layard's travels and also reports of his writing in *Nineveh and its Remains*, which though sometimes idealized, is often clinically descriptive.²²⁸ The press's promotional language was surely intended for their own circulatory benefit, fastening themselves

²²⁴ *British Quarterly Review* 9 (May 1849): 399–442. Also printed in Larsen, 69.

²²⁵ "Nineveh and Its Remains; With an Account of a Visit to the Chaldæan Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil-Worshippers; And an Inquiry into the Manners and Arts of the Ancient Assyrians by Austen Henry Layard". *The North American Review*, Vol. 69, No. 144 (Jul., 1849), pp. 113-114.

²²⁶ "Nineveh and Its Remains; With an Account of a Visit to the Chaldæan Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil-Worshippers; And an Inquiry into the Manners and Arts of the Ancient Assyrians by Austen Henry Layard". *The North American Review*, Vol. 69, No. 144 (Jul., 1849), pp. 113-114. Truthfully, Layard did encounter some issues with thievery, and had to rely on his own experience to navigate several delicate situations, though it is known from Layard's letters and *Nineveh and its Remains*, that the review's romanticized language is overstated.

²²⁷ "Obituary: Rev. Edward Hale". *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct., 1894), p. 373. Quotes the January 1849 edition of *The British Quarterly Review*.

²²⁸ An example of this type of Layard's writing can be found when Layard and his group, after riding through the desert for hours come upon an impasse. Layard begins by stating, "Two or three of the armed men scaled the rocks, and ran on before us as scouts; but the solitude was only broken by an eagle soaring above our heads", but ends with, "The pass we had to cross was one of the highest in the Chaldean country, and at this season there is snow on it. The ascent was long, steep and toilsome. . . I counted nine distinct mountain ranges". Austen Henry Layard. *Nineveh and its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849) 146.

to Layard's great success. In this, the press was able to position Layard's adventures and discoveries directly within English society, and further the mysterious, and often dubious, nature of the Assyrian visual culture that Byron and Martin had first established.

An example of this can be found in the *Illustrated London News*'s famous picture "The Bull and Lion in the British Museum" [Figure 25].²²⁹ From late 1850, the image depicts two separate scenes, each involving the colossal bull or lion standing indomitably above a male and female onlooker. Without any other visual context, the presentation of the sculpture thrusts Assyria into an undetermined space. The idea of course, is that the bull and the lion occupy their given place in the British Museum, and that the human couples in each scene, are admitted patrons. Observing these patrons, it is interesting to find that those interacting most with the bull and lion are the two women, who appear engaged, humbled and perhaps fearful of the giant beast before them. The men, by comparison, are somewhat less occupied with the sculptures. In the bull scene, the man looks either directly at the sculptures knee joint or well past it, while possibly also glancing downward at something in his hand. In the lion scene, the man gestures to the sculpture as if authoritatively instructing his female accomplice, though again, he appears to look past the sculpture itself.

Even though the *Illustrated London* news notes the sculptures are in the British Museum, in placement against a nondescript wall with a dark, indecipherable background, the Assyrian artifacts could be anywhere, characterizing Assyrian culture as somewhere within Britain's own. An illustrated plate in Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains* [Figure 26], shows the removal of the giant bull and lion from their buried confines in Nineveh.²³⁰ One of the colossal sculptures is positioned squarely against a black, earthen background, while the other is gazed upon by a man

²²⁹ "Human-headed and Eagle-Winged Bull". *Illustrated London News*. October 26, 1850.

²³⁰ The plate was originally painted by George Scharf Jr. and entitled "Lowering the Great Winged Bull".

dressed quite similarly to the men presented in the *Illustrated London News* article. A man in boots, breeches, a top hat and coat stands in the middle of an archaeological dig, while Eastern workers form lines around him, dressed in either local garb, or shown nearly nude. Layard stands above the archaeological pit, dressed similar to the central figure below, directing the excavations.

In the same year as his book was published, Layard returned to Assyria for a second round of excavations in August 1849. Accompanying him, “by order of the Trustees of the British Museum” was the artist Frederick Charles Cooper (1810-1880).²³¹ Though he would not last long in Assyria, returning home to England after just one archaeological season, Cooper’s Eastern work was turned into an extensive diorama, which detailed Layard’s work at Nineveh and Khorsabad. Conveying “historical information through reproductions of the artifacts and a record of the activities of the expedition” for viewers in England, Cooper’s diorama represented Assyria as reality.²³² Cooper’s diorama was displayed in the Gothic Hall of the British Museum and was remarked upon in an 1851 *John Bull* magazine article. The article is divided in its critical interpretation of the exhibition, with the first half noting that the paintings possessed,

. . . less executive skill than is shown in most of the dioramic paintings which has lately become so numerous. . . All the scenes. . . are here presented, with little or no endeavor at extraneous effort. . . The opening, to speak frankly, did not much please us.²³³

And the second portion stating:

²³¹ Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle*, 129.

²³² Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle*, 130. Jean Baudrillard, in his celebrated work, *Simulation and Simulacra*, notes that a first step simulation can occur when an image or idea is presented as a “profound reality”. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacra* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 6.

²³³ “Nineveh”. *John Bull* (London, England). Saturday, July 5, 1851. Issue 1591; 431.

We heartily recommend our readers to visit this exhibition. The artistic defects which, in our critical capacity, we have been bound to notice, are compensated by the general air of truthfulness; and the presence of Mr. Cooper who explains the passing scene.²³⁴

John Bull's idea of "truthfulness" and "the passing scene" is important in that it demonstrates a British version of an Assyrian narrative, simulated from reality. Even as the *John Bull* (and Layard) found Cooper's work executed poorly, the diorama displayed Assyria from a firsthand account, which through its inclusion of "cinematic technique", "panoramic vistas", "localized scenes" and "archaeological objects", presented to the viewer an Assyrian landscape which was perceivable as "real".²³⁵ The Assyria in Cooper's diorama was recognizable because it presented an Assyrian model, which was no longer dependent on imagination.²³⁶

Another Assyrian simulation which predated the Nineveh Court can be found in Joseph Bonomi's book, *Nineveh and its Palaces*. Made available to the public in 1852, Bonomi's work was constructed with three purposes: to recount the tales of Botta and Layard, to expound upon Assyrian history and geography, and to explicate the validation of the Bible through Layard's and Botta's finds.²³⁷ In regards to this last purpose, *Nineveh and its Palaces* accomplishes this with "an interesting account of the remarkable antiquities brought to light...in the mounds of

²³⁴ "Nineveh". *John Bull* (London, England). Saturday, July 5, 1851. Issue 1591; 431.

²³⁵ For a description of the contentious relationship between Layard and Cooper see Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle*, 130-132.

²³⁶ That is to say, while imagination could certainly be employed when appraising Cooper's exotic landscapes and intimate archaeological dig scenes, understanding of the space, place and time did not need to be imagined, because they were plainly presented from first hand account.

²³⁷ This became the norm for books that expounded upon the discoveries of Botta and Layard. The works almost always follow the program of: Assyria discovered by Botta and Layard; Nineveh in the Bible; Nineveh in Antiquity; some visual analysis. Besides Bonomi, another prime example of this is James Silk Buckingham's, *The buried city of the East, Nineveh: a narrative of the discoveries of Mr. Layard and M. Botta at Nimroud and Khorsabad; with descriptions of the exhumed sculptures, and particulars of the early history of the ancient Ninevite kingdom. Illustrated with one hundred engravings*, published in 1851.

Khorsabad and Nimroud.”²³⁸ An 1852 article from the Wesleyan centered, *Watchman*, perhaps provides the best explanation of this:

In treating of Nineveh and its palaces, the author [Bonomi] has followed a system of arrangement suggested by the sculptures which have been discovered. After having carefully examined those in the British Museum and in the Louvre, and studied the ground-plans of the respective structures with the original situations of the friezes, he has selected a starting point and pursued a regular and systematic course through the ruined chambers, reading the sculptures upon the walls together with the Scriptures as he progressed.²³⁹

Bonomi created a visual narrative, which guided the reader through a reconstruction of an Assyrian palace. Into his imaginary palace, Bonomi incorporated many objects, which were able to be seen in the very real space of the British Museum. Beginning his tour, Bonomi wrote:

We shall therefore. . . proceed to examine . . . the north-west quarter of the palace . . . Proceeding through the central opening, we are accompanied on each side by winged human-headed lions, and find ourselves in a large hall, 160 feet long by nearly 40 feet wide”.²⁴⁰

By placing the reader in a far off and ancient land, in a simulated palatial hall, “composed of unburnt brick incrustated with slabs of marble (gypsum) eight inches in thickness and seven feet wide”, while referencing the bull and lion one could actually visit (which had only two years earlier been presented in the *Illustrated London News*), Bonomi made his manifestation of the unreal palace imaginable, as a three-dimensional space that the Victorian reader could explore.²⁴¹

Similar to Layard’s Nineveh Court guidebook, Bonomi provides validating references throughout his writing, mentioning distant and contemporary figures, biblical allusions, modern

²³⁸ “Our Library Table”. *The Watchman and Wesleyan Advertiser*. April 28, 1852. Issue: 905. pg. 134. Joseph Bonomi. *Nineveh and Its Palaces* (London: T. Tegg, 1852).

²³⁹ “Our Library Table”. *The Watchman and Wesleyan Advertiser*. April 28, 1852. Issue: 905. pg. 134.

²⁴⁰ Joseph Bonomi. *Nineveh and Its Palaces*. 251.

²⁴¹ Joseph Bonomi, *Nineveh and its Palaces*, 251.

social circumstances and iconographic interpretations, which all lend believability to his Assyrian simulation.²⁴² Bonomi couples the hyperreality of an exaggerated Assyrian palace with the realistic existence of factual modern events and historical anecdotes. In Baudrillardian terminology, it would likely be labeled a “productive” simulation, as the fictitious reality that *Nineveh and its Palaces* produced, was not qualitatively different from the real world.²⁴³ In *Nineveh and its Palaces*, Bonomi presents an Assyria entrenched in ancient history; even as it is made a fully modern and believable simulation, which places the reader between contemporary Britain and Assyria distant, therefore constructing a believable simulation for the Victoria reader.

²⁴² Bonomi references Rameses II and Herodotus, Sir John Chardin, James Yates, Botta and Layard in his writing. Biblical allusions are found throughout, though two of the most important refer to Psalms 16 and 23, while the plate on the books title page shows the human headed winged-lion, with the caption “the first was like a lion, and had eagles wings - Dan. vii. 4.” underneath it. Towards contemporary anecdotes, on page 306 Bonomi references a contemporary article in the *Illustrated London Times*. The footnote reads, “Illustrated London News, Dec. 21, 1850”.

²⁴³ Jean Baudrillard. “Simulacres et science-fiction”. *Science Fiction Studies*, Volume 18, Number 3. November, 1999. 309.

Chapter IX

Recognizing Assyria

Recognition plays a crucial role in the modern understanding of how the Nineveh Court was socially received, either as real art or as an illusionary reproduction. As an intellectual idea, recognition has existed for as long as humans have; recognizing and replicating patterns in nature were amongst mankind's first creative endeavors.²⁴⁴ As such, recognition, in its most basic terms, revolves around the fact of experience, for one cannot recognize what one does not know. However, recognition, in theory, stretches beyond affinity, it is, in and of itself, a personal way of cognitively documenting and recalling previous patterns of personal experience. From the 1820s on, those in Victorian England had been presented with several simulations, which patterned what Assyria and its art looked like, to the social receiver.²⁴⁵ These simulations changed over time to become a presentation, which was based on appropriation and comparative judgment. As such, it is important to understand that the Nineveh Court, even as it presented a physical construction that was mired in inferred origin, layered in meaning and steeped in symbols, was highly recognizable as "Assyria" to its viewers.

In attempting to understand how the Nineveh Court was able to be interpreted by the viewer as a realistic representation of "Assyria", it could also be argued that new technological innovation then found at Sydenham heightened the reality of an Assyrian simulation for Nineveh Court patrons; as Nicolas Bourriaud has said, "artistic activity is a game, whose forms, patterns and functions develop and evolve according to periods and social contexts."²⁴⁶ Advancing

²⁴⁴ See Marjorie Elliot Bevin. *Design Through Discovery* (New York: Holt, 1967) chapter 1, "Design and Life"

²⁴⁵ Whether factually presented or otherwise.

²⁴⁶ Nicolas Bourriaud. "Relational Forms". *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du The I, 2002) 11.

technology and its integration with nationalism at Sydenham in the nineteenth century enabled a type of culture, which was “influenced by personal and social events, works of similar type and cultural tradition.”²⁴⁷ In this culture, recognition was not only personally specific, but culturally as well.

At the time of the Assyrian Court, those in continental Europe possessed a social understanding of Assyria, because it had been culturally presented and adopted through artistic creativity, archaeological discovery, literary work and simulative presentation. Even though the concept of “Assyria” and “Assyrian art” underwent numerous cultural and artistic re-construals and decontextualization’s in both an institutional and social setting, the theoretical idea of “Assyria” was still known. Comparably, in, for example, an East Asian country, social understanding of Assyria would have likely been much different as Byron, Martin, Layard, Bonomi, the British Museum and the Academy were not culturally relevant. Patron recognition of the Assyrian Court was largely culturally determined; understanding of the Assyrian Court was transferred to its patrons through visual, critical characteristics and aesthetic interconnections that had been previously presented through simulation.²⁴⁸

Examples of this “aesthetic interconnectedness” are found existing between Martin’s *Fall of Nineveh* and Layard’s Nineveh Court.²⁴⁹ In John Martin’s, *Fall of Nineveh*, the principle non-human subject is the city-scape of Nineveh, which is presented with geometric precision that reflects the well known and preferred temple or palace conformations of Antiquity. Martin, of course, had no idea what a Ninevite temple or palace looked like — no one did — Nineveh had yet to be discovered. So, to appropriate a phrase from Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen,

²⁴⁷ Jonathan Lethem. “The Ecstasy of Influence: A plagiarism” in *Harpers Magazine*. February 2007.

²⁴⁸ Gunther Kress. Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images* (London: Routledge, 1999) 6.

²⁴⁹ Gablik. *The Reenchantment*, 22.

what Martin was representing in his painting was not an actual Ninevite temple or palace, but traditional aspects of representation that vividly transferred “templeness” or “palaceness” to the viewer.²⁵⁰ Temples, it was known, had columns and likewise, palaces were large, grand and ornate. Therefore, in painting the Ninevite complex as a large, columned and ornamented representation, Martin was conveying to the viewer that his construction was a palace or temple, because it featured established characteristics such as columns, entablature, molding and geometric construction. Then, through Orientalizing his construct with Egyptian and Indian decorative features believed to be relative to Assyrian, Martin presented a palace or temple which can be recognized as being Assyrian.²⁵¹ Martin acts as a “sign-maker”, by using forms which he felt were the most appropriate conduit for expressing an Assyrian palace.²⁵² Martin was not actively painting a Ninevite scene, but instead, a recognizable palace paradigm which he simply gave the moniker of “Nineveh”. The Nineveh Court functions similarly; it appropriates, in formal and compositional construction, symbolically, what was made culturally available by Martin and others. The Nineveh Court as it was constructed by Jones, Ferguson and Layard, fused meaning with form.²⁵³ Though Layard had firsthand experience with archaeological plans and surveyed ruins, the architectural features of the Nineveh Court combined Assyrian, Persian and Egyptian motifs in the same manner that Martin’s *Fall of Nineveh* had. In construction, the

²⁵⁰ Kress and Leeuwen use the example of a car, in stating, “A car. . . was defined by the criterial characteristics of “having wheels”, and his representation focused on this aspect. What he represented was in fact, “wheelness”. *Reading Images*, 6.

²⁵¹ Again, Martin’s brochure states, as invented as the most appropriate for a city situate [sic] betwixt the two countries [Egypt and India] and necessarily in frequent intercourse with them” Bohrer, “Inventing Assyria”, 337. In this writing, see, “Simulating Assyria” section.

²⁵² Kress and Leeuwen. *Reading Images*, 7.

²⁵³ Bridget Somekh. Cathy Lewin. *Theory and Methods in Social Research* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2011) 19.

Nineveh Court followed the general scheme of “palaceness”, displaying fluted columns, an open arcade, frieze carving and graded, geometric construction.²⁵⁴

Semiotics, which connect Bonomi’s, *Nineveh and its Palaces* to the Nineveh Court can also be found in Bonomi, who begins chapter four of his work by stating, “in elucidating the architecture and construction of the Assyrian palaces, we have already turned for aid to Persepolis,” a statement which Layard echoes in his guidebook when he states that the Assyrian Court’s columns were modeled from those discovered and preserved in the ruins of Susa and Persepolis.²⁵⁵ However, semiotically, and as literary devices, Bonomi’s *Nineveh and its Palaces* and Layard’s Nineveh Court are intrinsically different. From the three-dimensional structure at the Nineveh Court, a patron could experience the English presented “Assyria” in the first person, and therefore spatially and processionally. Yet, in exploring Bonomi’s imagined palace, the reader is forthrightly explained all the merits and elements of the ancient world. Therefore the cognitive visual component developed as a result of reading *Nineveh and its Palaces*, is directly related to its own linguistic narrative.

The semiotic dichotomy existing between the Nineveh Court and *Nineveh and its Palaces* is strictly physical. Because of it being physically interactive, the Nineveh Court engages in a type of negotiation with its patrons, where the physical forms and semiotic signs of the palace structure gift the patron numerous visually distinguishable elements, but never a strict sublimation of definitive identification. Contrarily, in Bonomi, simulation is presented as non-negotiable, and is either adopted by the reader as fact, taken as false, or construed again from an

²⁵⁴ With columns that are Doric and a flourished Ionic entablature, the Assyrian Palace features a Classical construction with added ornamentation and exotic features. Furthermore, the projecting cornice above the entablature of the Assyrian Court is reminiscent of certain Egyptian constructs, such as the Philae Temple of Isis, which dates to the 30th Dynasty. The 30th Dynasty dates approximately, 380 BC to 340 BC. The entire temple complex was constructed throughout the late Egyptian into Ptolemaic times.

²⁵⁵ Bonomi, *Nineveh and its Palaces*, 147. Layard, *The Nineveh Court*, 47-48.

alternate interpretation; the Nineveh Court, unlike Bonomi's palace, was not semiotically self-directed, but was semiotically resolute.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶Jonathan Lethem. "The Ecstasy of Influence: A plagiarism" in *Harpers Magazine*. February 2007.

Part IV

Conclusion

Assyrian Legacy

Amongst those who study nineteenth century art history, early archaeology, English history and Imperialism, the stories and personas of Austen Henry Layard and his French counterpart, Paul-Émile Botta are legendary; both individuals were, truly, nineteenth century celebrities. Recently, academic research on the two men and their archaeological undertakings has experienced a great resurgence, with works such as Frederick Bohrer's seminal, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, Shawn Malley's thorough, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain*, and Mogens Trolle Larsen's vividly narrative, *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land, 1840-1860*, exploring the vast social and political connections which existed between Layard, the British Museum and the British State. But, while these works (and others) have aided in pushing the boundaries of social art history, archaeological pedagogy and postcolonial and exoticist discussion, they have somewhat neglected providing discourse on the actual objects which Layard discovered. As such, the objective of this study was to develop further understanding on the role which the British Museum, the British State and the British public played in Assyrian archaeological discovery, while being primarily concerned with the objects which Layard uncovered.

It, therefore, became my goal to try and reconstruct the British Museum's 1847, 1849 and 1851 exhibitions of Assyrian art, from an object level, as accurately as possible. Furthermore, it was also my goal to formally and visually analyze the Nineveh Court, a paradigmatic reconstruction of an Assyrian palace at the 1854 Sydenham Crystal Palace, and to appraise its spectator reception comparative to the previous displays of Assyrian art at the British Museum. In doing this, I became primarily concerned with examining newly formed digital archives; searching through period newspapers, journals and letters for references, critiques and expositions on the British Museum exhibitions. In the course of this research, I also uncovered newfound evidence that a display of Assyrian art occurred in Colabah, Bombay, British

India, in December, 1846. Previously undiscussed, the Colabah display presents a new and intriguing scenario for postcolonial analysis, in that it represents a culture tripartite; the oppressed, the oppressor and the non-native. From all of this research, I have been able to determine that the first modern exhibition of Assyrian art occurred not in Europe, as previously thought, but in British India. I have also been able to establish objects included in the British Museum's exhibitions of 1847, 1849 and 1851, which were either unknown, or not mentioned in previous literature published on this topic. In this, I hope that my discoveries will open up discussions and questions surrounding the modern rediscovery and exhibition of Assyrian art.

The legacy of Layard's Assyrian discoveries, as well as the Nineveh Court, is intriguing to consider. In the same month that this writing was completed, artifacts and ruins at Nimrud, Dur Sharukkin and the Kuyunjik have been destroyed by the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIS). Artifacts destroyed include sets of Lamassus as well as statuary and slab reliefs similar to those now in the British Museum. Additionally, the mounds at Nimrud, first excavated by Layard in 1846, have been bulldozed. Accordingly, the fact that Assyrian remains exist intact at the British Museum (and in other institutions around the world) is extremely important. While the ethics and legality of taking artifacts from their homeland for display in other destinations has been a hotly debated topic in recent memory, and will rightfully remain at the forefront of ethical and philosophical debate, it is a little contested fact that had Layard's discoveries remained in situ in Northern Iraq, they would have presently been in great danger.

Austen Henry Layard, for his efforts, was rewarded with an honorary degree from the University of Oxford in 1849, with an appointment as a Trustee of the British Museum in 1866, as the Ambassador at Constantinople in 1877 and was Knighted with the Order of the Bath in 1878. By comparison, the legacy of the Nineveh Court is somewhat more fleeting. Engulfed by a fire in 1866, much of the Sydenham Palace and many of the Fine Arts Courts were destroyed; ironically enough, the Palace itself became the lost world that it was constructed to display.



Figure 1

Lamassu from Nimrud, discovered by Layard.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Personal from of the author.

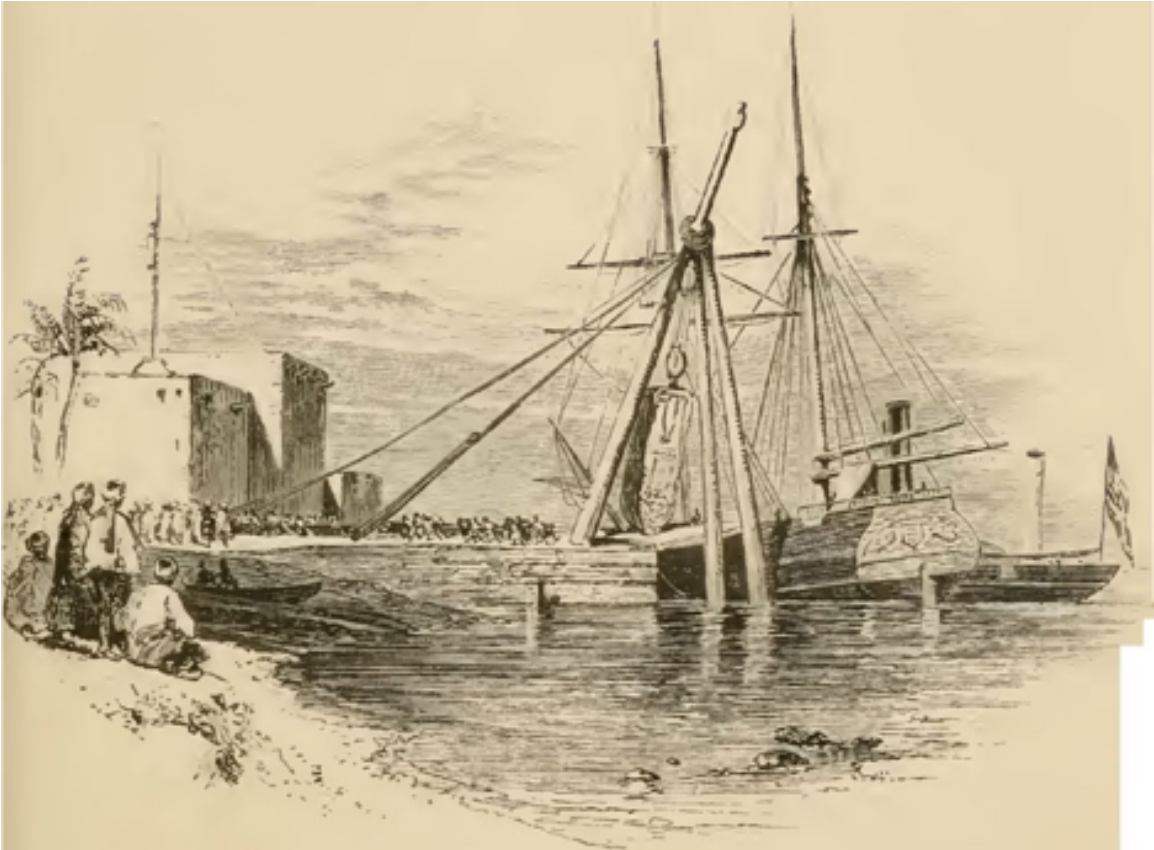


Figure 2

Shipping of the Great Bull from Nimrud.
Originally published in Layard's, *Nineveh and its Remains*.

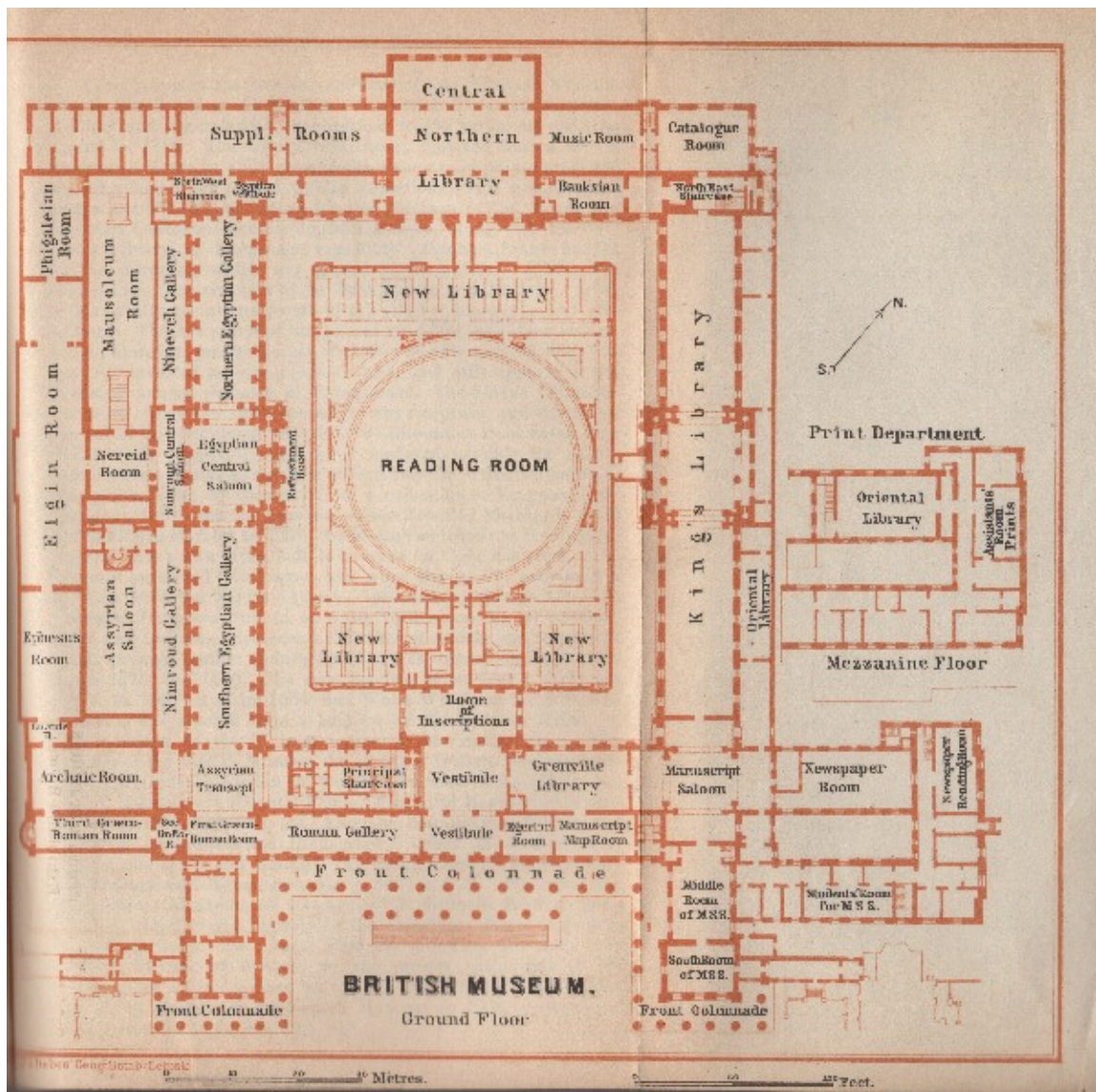


Figure 3

The Room of Miscellany at the British Museum

1. A figure, with rosary in hand, complete.
2. A man's head, with chip on behind.
3. Head of King's servant, complete.
4. A small figure, with rosary in hand, complete, with the exception of the feet.
- 5 & 6. A figure of a man on horse back.
7. Man's head, with chip on the crown.
8. Man's head, with moustaches.
9. Man's head, with a little hair gone behind.
- 10 & 11. Figure of a Warrior, with bow and arrow.
12. Two hands, and one block with inscription, over which are two human feet and a horse hoof.
- 13 to 15. Figure of Prime Minister's servant.
- 16 to 20. Figure of a king, royally arrayed, with dagger in his girdle.
- 21 to 23. Figure of Prime Minister.
24. Figure carrying a wine or water skin on its head.
- 25 & 26. Four heads, two of which are those of Eunuchs.
27. A head with beard, and two small horse-heads.
28. One small fine horse-head in two pieces, with eye-lash in paper. Two small men's heads, with beards. One dagger-head, formed by two lion's heads. Two pieces of stone with writing.
29. Eighteen pieces of stone with writing for specimens.

Figure 4

List of objects displayed in the Colabah exhibit
 "Sculptures from Nineveh", *The Friend of India*



Figure 5

Archibald Archer, *The Temporary Elgin Room*, 1819
Oil on canvas, 94cm x132.7cm
The British Museum



Figure 6

Richard Westmacott, *The Progress of Civilization*, 1850s
South Pediment, British Museum



Figure 7

Richard Westmacott, *Progress of Civilization*, detail, 1850s
South Pediment, British Museum



Figure 8

**The “Room of Miscellany” as shown in 1852.
Photograph by Roger Fenton.
The British Museum Archives**



Figure 9

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III
Assyrian, 858-824 BC, from Nimrud.
The British Museum



Figure 10

“Eagle Headed Deity”
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, from Nimrud.
Personal photo of the author.



Figure 11

“Winged Deity”

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, from Nimrud.
Personal photo of the author.

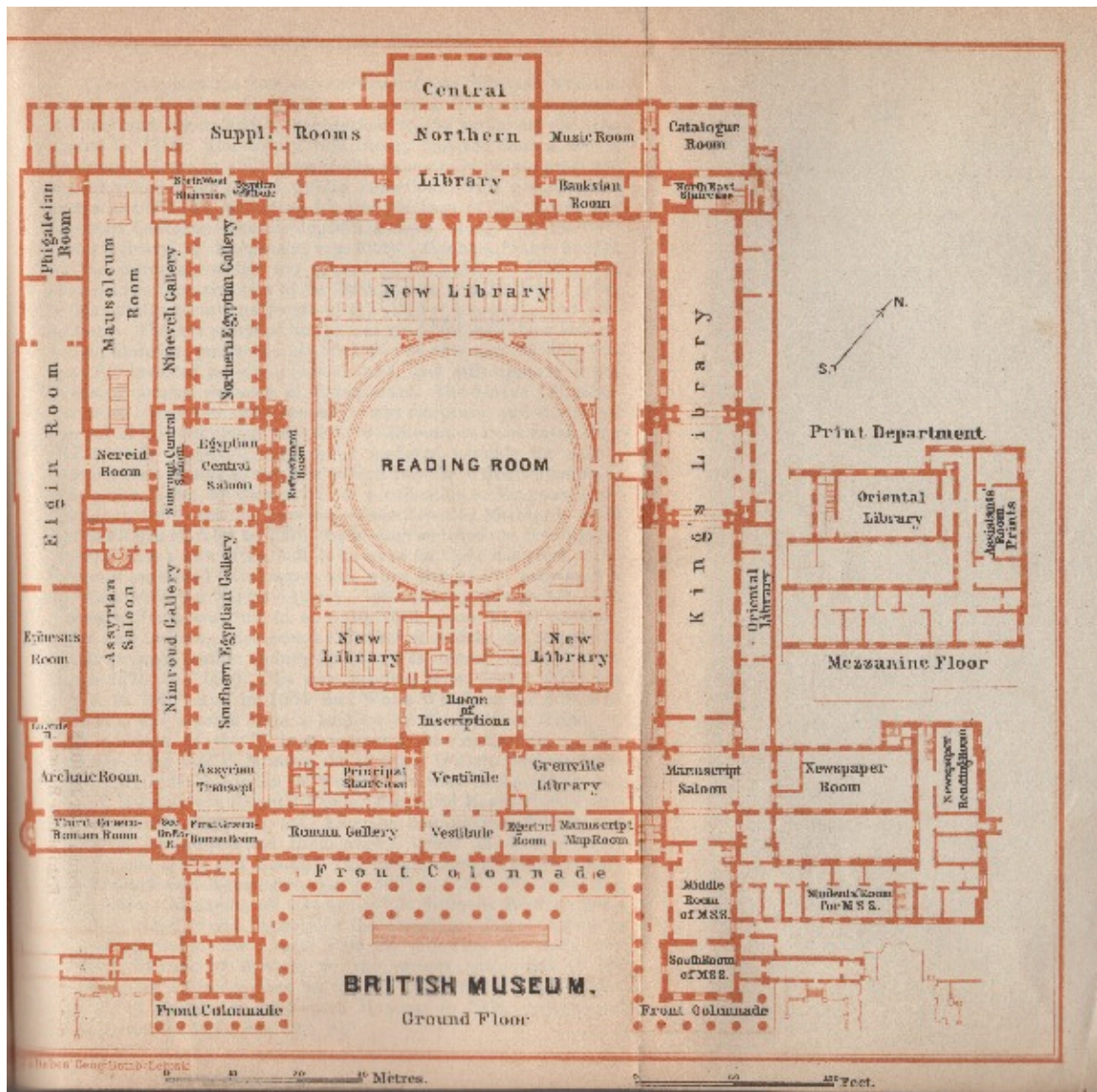


Figure 12

The Nimrud Room, or Assyrian Basement.

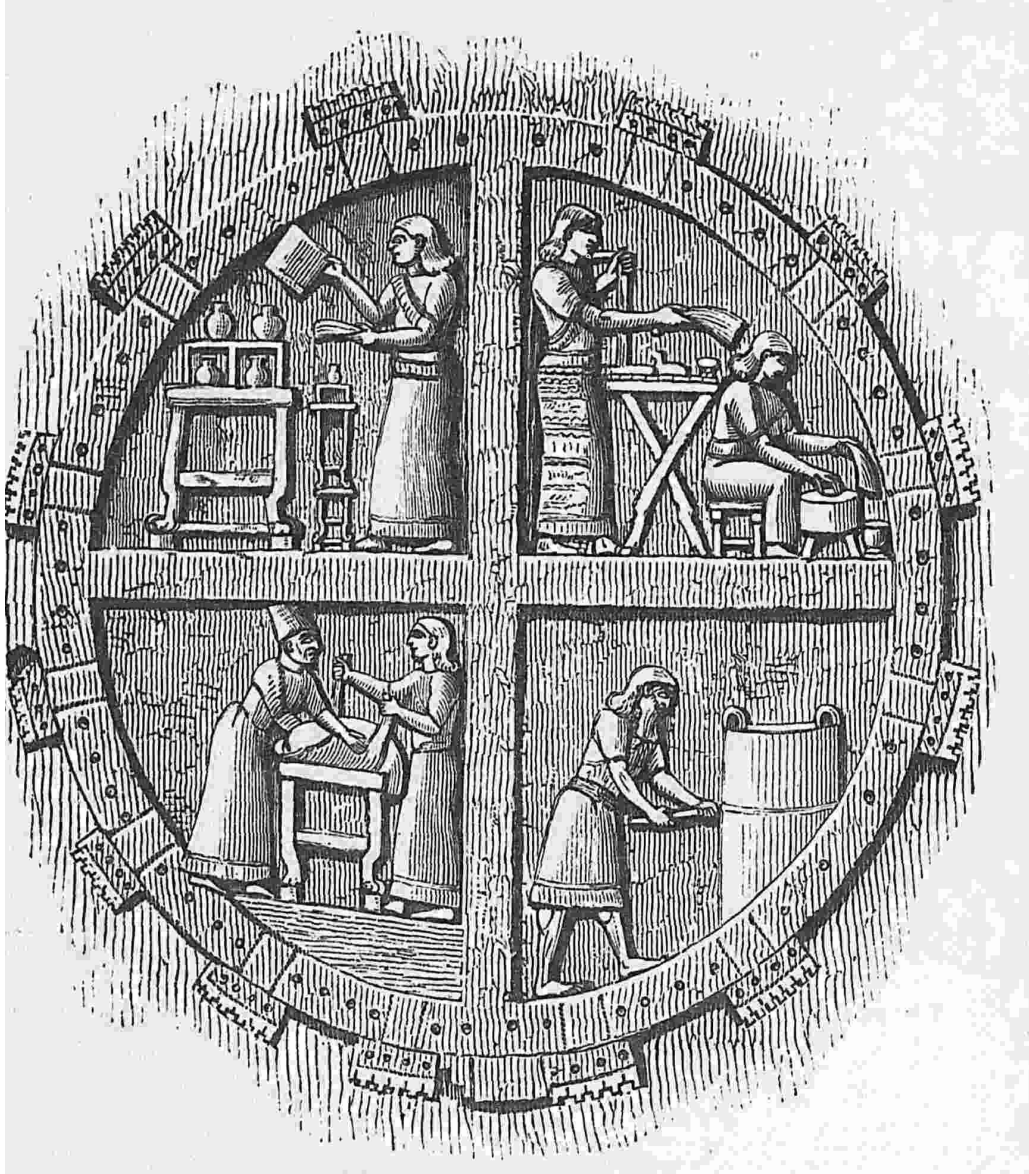


Figure 13

“Interior of a Castle”

“Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum”. *The Lady's Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday, December, 29, 1849; Issue 157.



Figure 14

“Triumphal Return of the King from Battle”
“Nineveh Marbles in the British Museum”. *The Lady’s Newspaper* (London, England), Saturday,
December, 29, 1849; Issue 157.

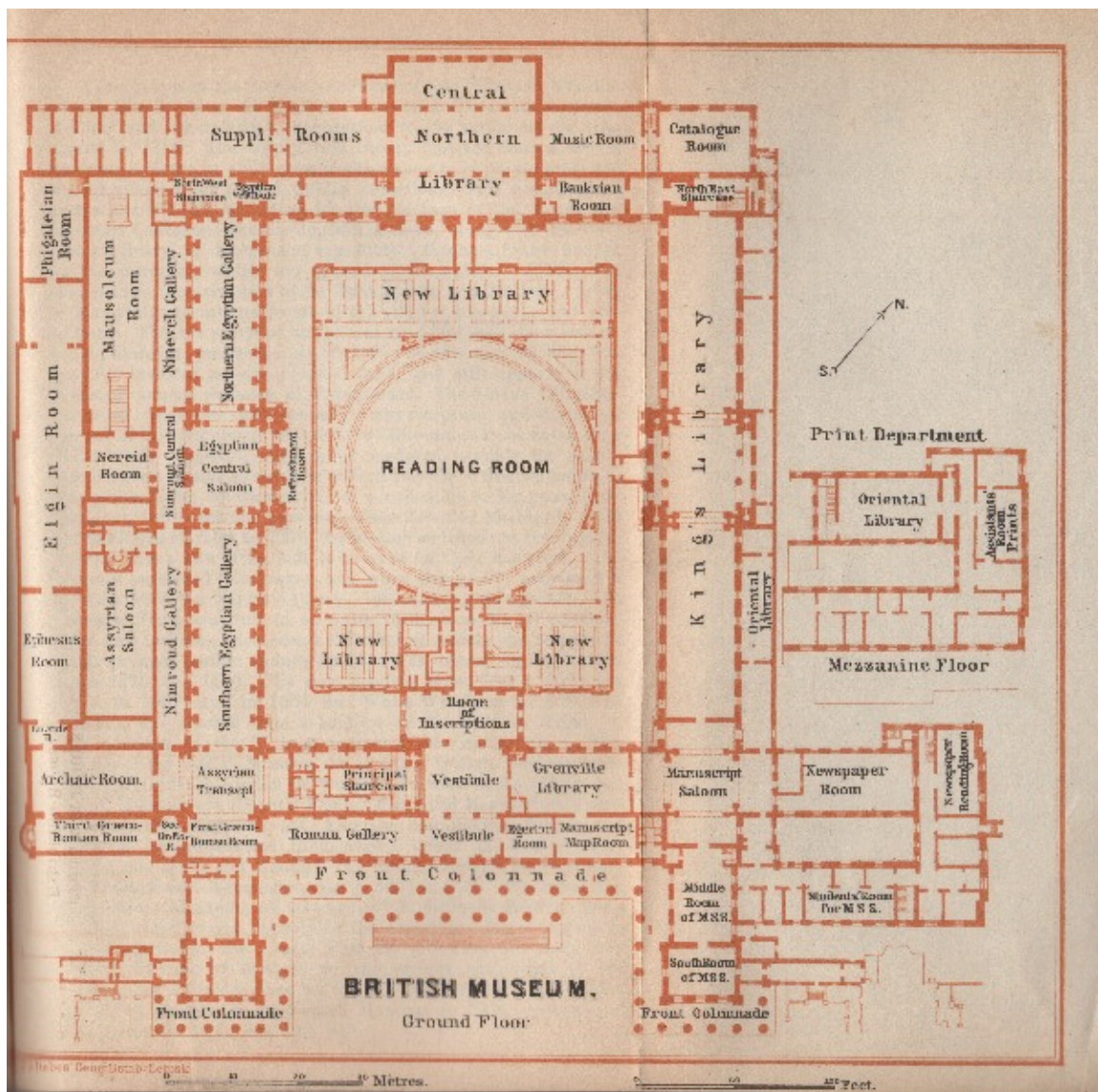


Figure 15

Plan of the British Museum showing Assyrian Saloon



Figure 16

“Two figures standing, between whom is the sacred tree”
From Nimrud.
The British Museum.



Figure 17

“A Slab Containing Two Figures of Nisroch”
From Nimrud.
The British Museum.



Figure 18

“Slab on which is the same tree, between two kneeling figures”

From Nimrud.

The British Museum.

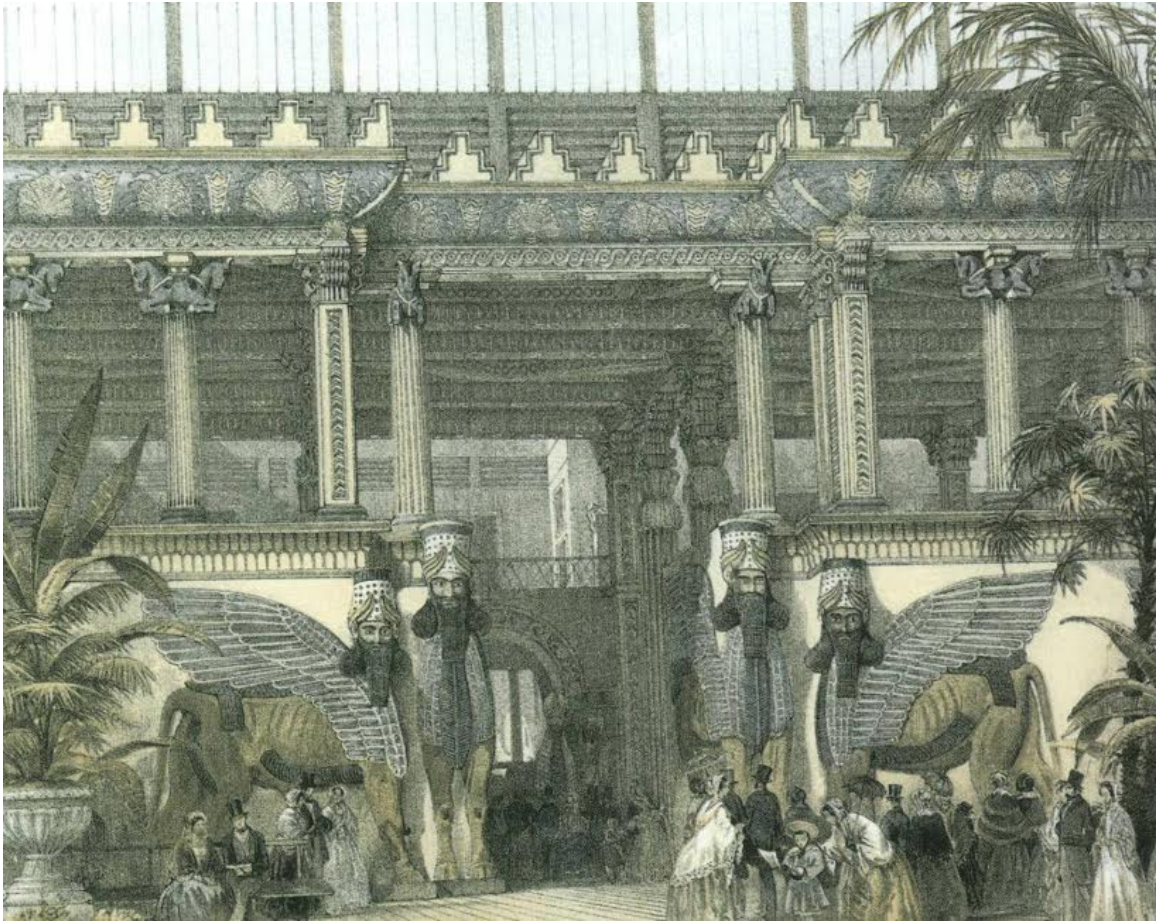


Figure 19

Exterior View of the Nineveh Court.
From, Jan Piggott, *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936*

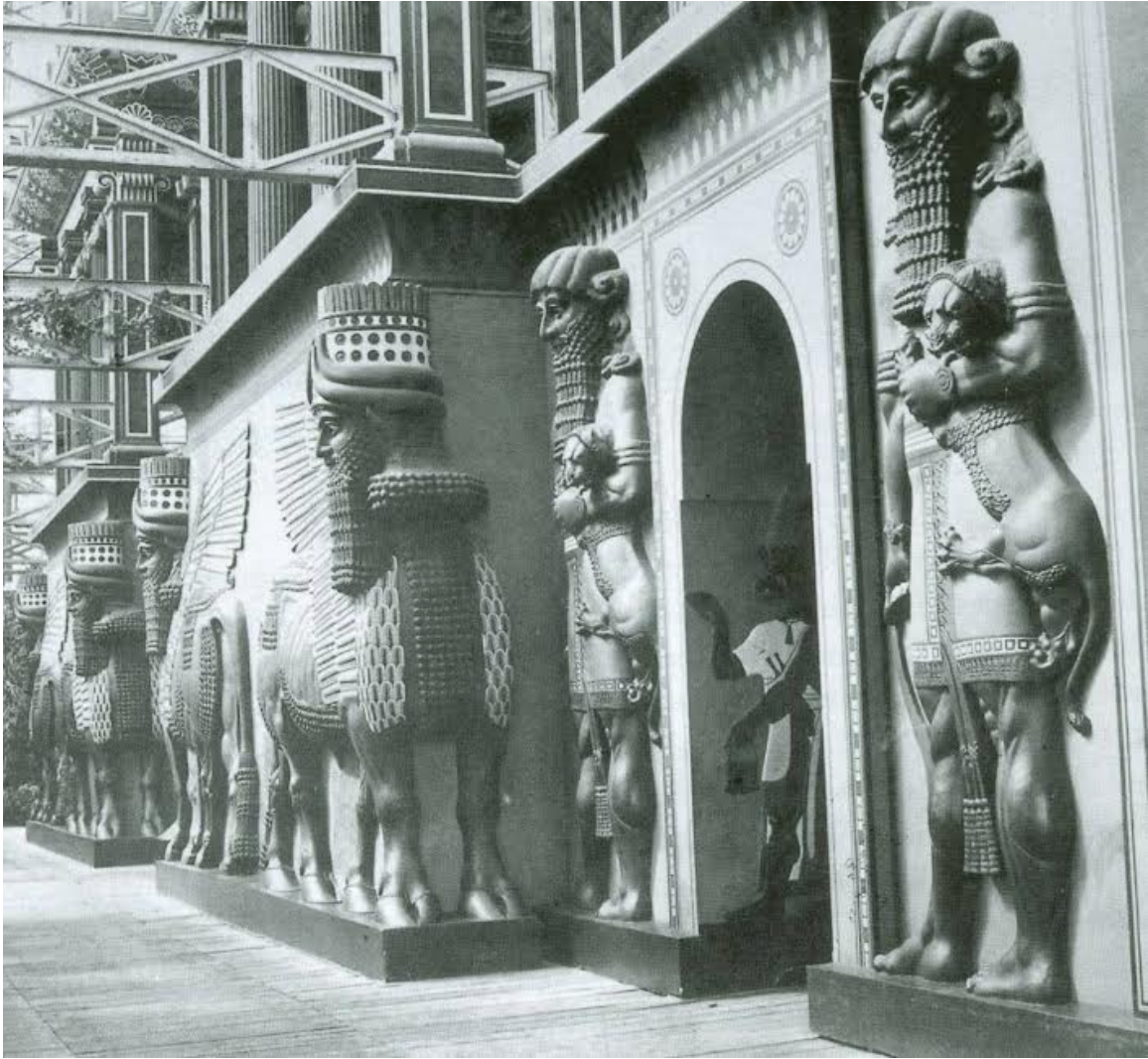


Figure 20

Exterior view of the Assyrian Palace at the Nineveh Court.
From, Jan Piggott, *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936*

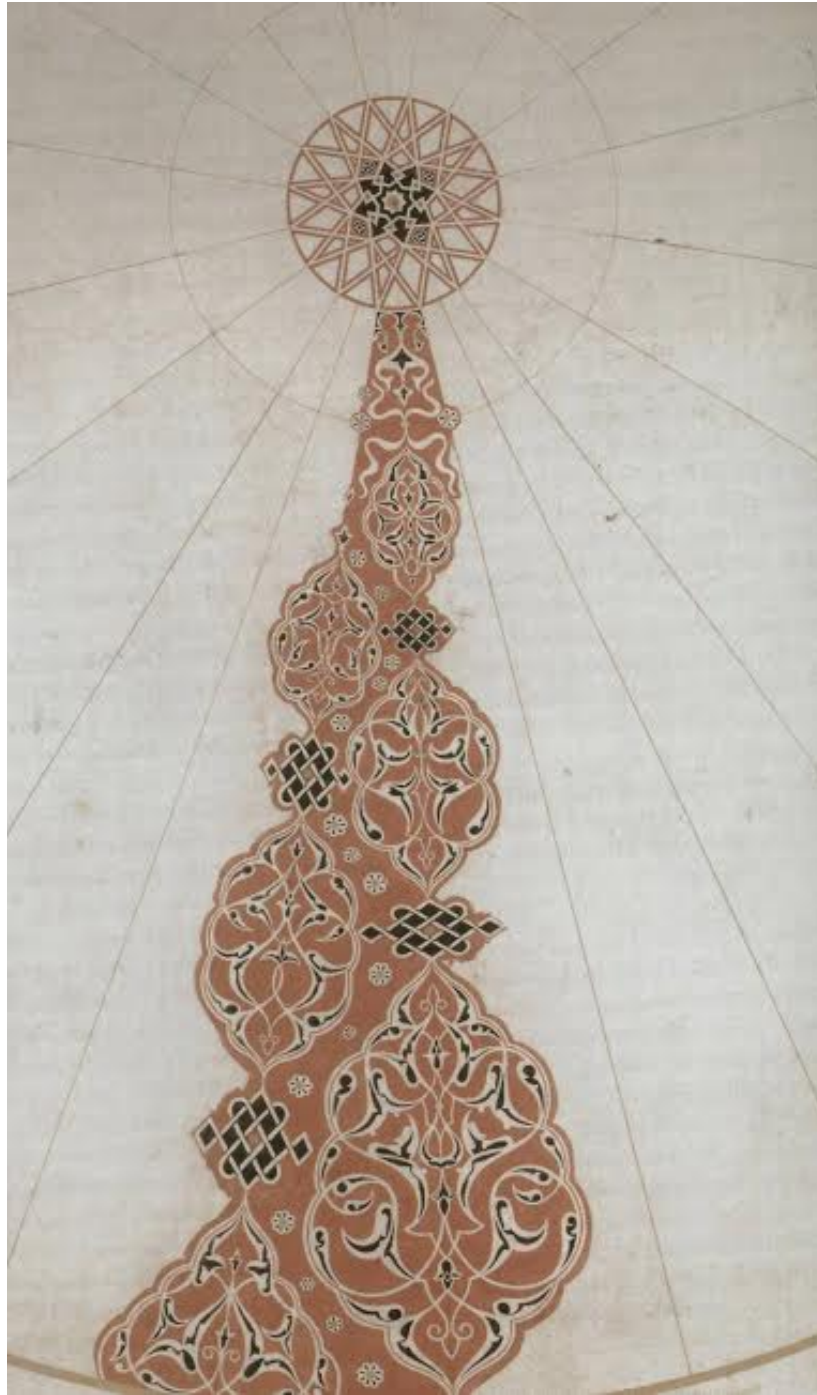


Figure 21

Drawing from Owen Jones, *Grammar of Ornament*
From, Jan Piggott, *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936*

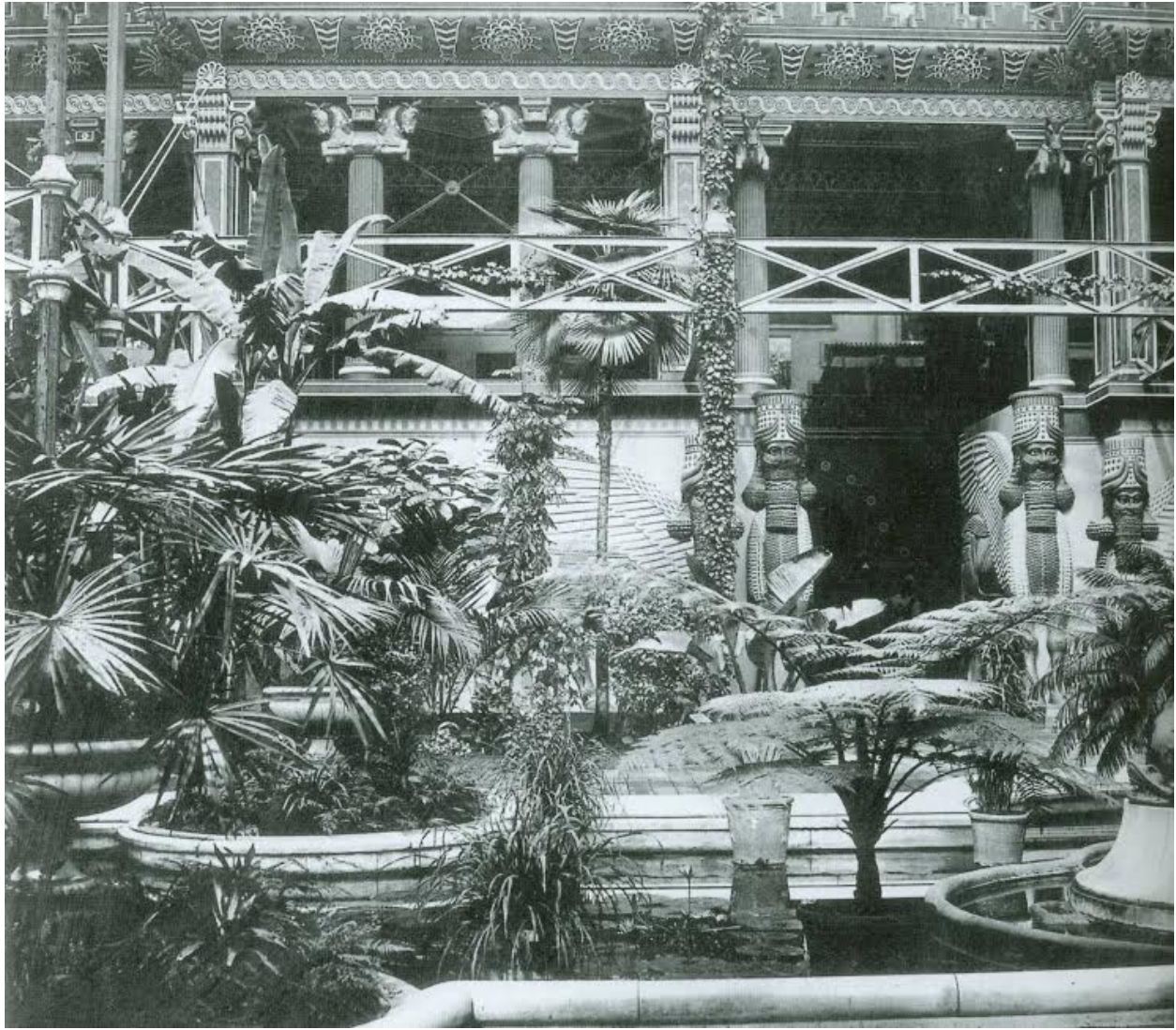


Figure 22

Exterior view of the Nineveh Court from across the Tropical Garden
From, Jan Piggott, *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936*

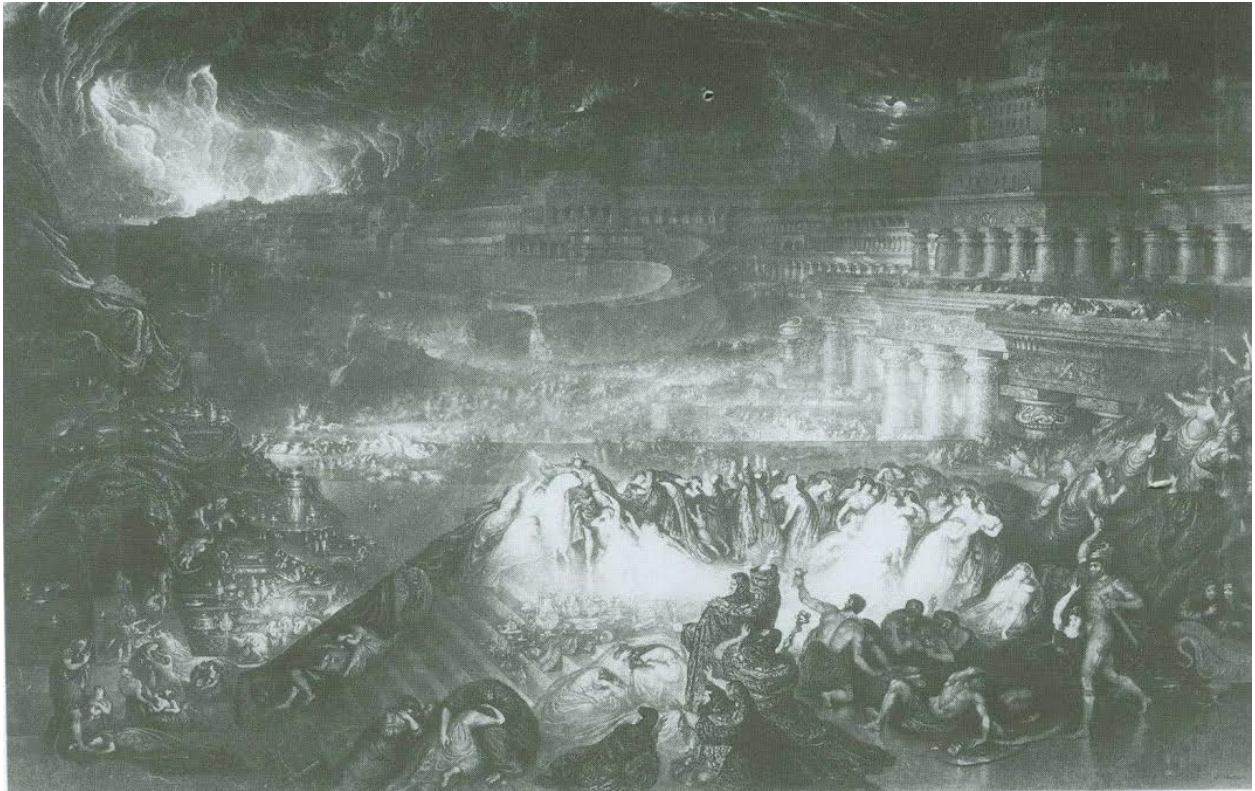


Figure 23

John Martin, *Fall of Nineveh*, mezzotint, 1829
The British Museum, 53.4cm x 80.0 cm.



Figure 24

Eugene Delacroix. *Mort de Sardanapale*, 1827, oil on canvas.
Musée du Louvre, 3.9 m x 5.0 m.

NIMROUD SCULPTURES JUST RECEIVED AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM.



BULL-HEADED AND EAGLE-WINGED BULL.

agony, but in the act of standing motionless. The countenance is stern and expressionless in expression; the features are of a fine (Pindaric type); the nose is egg-shaped, with three horns, and a small round the base of it. The hair at the back of the head has some rings of curls, and the beard, as in the petasus of the King, is divided into three rings of curls, with intervals of every hair. In the eyes, which are those of a bull, are pendant ear-rings. The whole of the drapery is covered with lines of curls, and four rows are partitioned beneath the rim along the whole length; on the back are six rows of curls, and upon the breast a square band, ringed concentrically, and down the back of the thigh four rows. The hair at the end of the tail is curled like the beard, with intervals of every hair. The hair at the knee joints is likewise curled, terminating right per-

the view of the bull in a single part of the kind (if we may see the horn), which, under some. The elaborately sculptured wings extend over the back of the animal to the very edge of the chest. All the feathers of the wings are covered with concentric inscriptions, there being twenty-two lines between the fore legs, twenty-one lines in the middle, sixteen lines between the hind legs, and forty-seven lines between the tail and the edge of the chest. The whole of this is in relief, with the exception of the fore feet, which are in a lower superposition, but which are not shown in their proper place.

As it represents the Human-headed and Winged Lion—of the long and the same in height; and in purpose and position the same as the preceding, which, however, it does not quite equal in execution. In this relief we have the same head, with the egg-shaped three-horned head-down, exactly like that of the bull; but the nose is human, and not that of a lion. The beard and hair of the head are even yet more elaborately curled than the bull; but the hair on the legs and sides of the animal represents that straight appendage of the animal. Behind the lion is a succession of numerous curls, which are drawn into long elegant knots; or the extremities are longer, forming as many distinct bands. At the end of the tail the hair, as which we mentioned as a human article, is distinctly visible. The strength of both animals is wonderfully and characteristically conveyed. Upon the far surface of this side, as in the last, is a very fine inscription; 20 lines being between the fore legs, 26 in the middle, 16 between the hind legs, and 11 at the back.



Figure 25

"Nimrud Sculptures Just Received At The British Museum".
Illustrated London News, 1849.



Figure 26

Layard Above the Assyrian Excavations.
Originally published in Layard's, *Nineveh and its Remains*.

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